

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

February  
2020

# ANIMATION<sup>TM</sup>

## MAGAZINE

**GOLDEN GLOBE<sup>®</sup>**  
NOMINATION  
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**CRITICS' CHOICE AWARD**  
NOMINATION  
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**6 ANNIE AWARD**  
NOMINATIONS  
INCLUDING  
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE


"Toy Story 4" inches us closer to confronting and understanding the very question that has plagued artists, philosophers for time immemorial: what is the meaning of life?"

THE OBSERVER, Oliver Jones

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION  
**BEST PICTURE**  
Best Animated Feature  
Best Adapted Screenplay  
Best Original Song







“‘The Lion King’ is proof that Jon Favreau is among  
the best filmmakers working in Hollywood today.”

**Forbes** – *Mark Hughes*

“This extraordinary movie is so visually stunning... ‘The Lion King’  
creates an African savanna of breathtaking photorealism.”

**Newsday** – *Rafer Guzman*

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION  
IN ALL CATEGORIES

Disney  
THE  
LION KING



THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

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2020

# ANIMATION<sup>TM</sup>

## MAGAZINE

### The Wonderful Witchcraft of Disney Channel's The Owl House

*DreamWorks  
Races Ahead with  
Fast & Furious:  
Spy Racers*

*Nickelodeon's  
It's Pony  
Is a Real  
Thoroughbred*

*Plus The  
Witcher,  
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**BEST FEATURE**



RADIO TIMES



MOVIEGUIDE

*For Your Consideration*  
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

**Klaus**





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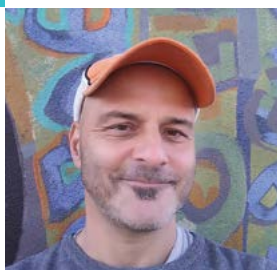
By Charles Solomon

## Final Shot

### 49 A Day in the Life of ...

This month, we pay a visit to producer **Angela Santomero**, co-creator of hits like *Blue's Clues & You*.





## 2020: A Whole Lot of Animation Goin' On!

**Y**es, it's that time again when we get all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, hoping that this new year will be a time of extraordinary creativity and optimism. When we'll see less of man's evil and more of the human capacity for good actions and global positivity. After all, the number 2020 has a really good ring to it, so why not hope for the best, right?

There are plenty of reasons to be excited about this year: It's an especially good time to be a Pixar fan, since audiences are treated to two new, completely original features from the studio: Dan Scanlon's *Onward* (March 6) and Pete Docter's *Soul* (June 19). The folks at DreamWorks also have a busy year ahead. The studio is delivering two sequels to two of its highly popular movies: *Trolls World Tour* (April 17) and *The Croods 2* (Dec. 23). May is going to be a super busy month as well, since both *Scoob!* and *The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie: It's a Wonderful Sponge* are poised to take a bite out of the late spring family audience share.

Netflix has a wide variety of features in store for us in 2020. The streamer is releasing Aardman's much-anticipated *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* in February, and following it up with Kris Pearn's *The Willoughbys* in spring. Meanwhile, Glen Keane's CG-animated musical *Over the Moon* about a young girl who dreams of visiting a moon goddess is slated for the fall.

Universal/Illumination is back in the little yellow people business this July when *Minions: The Rise of Gru* opens in theaters nationwide. The innovative team at Sony Pictures Animation



also have a great treat for us in the fall when director Mike Rianda's clever and visually stunning *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* (working title) opens wide.

Disney fans will be happy to know that the studio is releasing Locksmith Animation's *Ron's Gone Wrong* in November as well as its own 59<sup>th</sup> animated feature *Raya and the Last Dragon*, directed by Paul Briggs and Dean Wellins, on Nov. 25. Let's not forget that Cartoon Saloon's beautiful, 2D-animated feature *Wolfwalkers* is also supposed to arrive this year, courtesy of the folks at Apple TV+.

Since the only major animated movie that opens wide this month is Makoto Shinkai's *Weathering with You*, which we covered in last month's issue, we had the chance to write about some of the many new animated series which are popping up on Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and Netflix in the early part of the year. Make sure you check out our features about *The Owl House*, *The Fast & the Furious: Spy Racers*, *It's Pony* and *The Witcher*, among many of the other fun items we have packed in

this first issue of the year!

By the way, this June, we are publishing our 300<sup>th</sup> issue, just in time for the Annecy Festival in France! We are putting together a list of 300 things we love about the animation and VFX business. So make sure you write to us and let us know about your favorite things, so that we can include them in the mix. We're hoping to deliver a real blockbuster issue, which will reflect the healthy glow of our industry and favorite art form. Now, keep your fingers crossed! Happy 2020 everyone!

*Ramin*

Ramin Zahed  
Editor in Chief  
ramin@animationmagazine.net

"What we found is, particularly when I came in, the rooms were becoming more and more diverse. But creative leadership wasn't yet. Things take years. But we all started really talking about the effect it has to have a creative leader. If you are a woman in the room or you are diverse in the room and you see someone represented who is like you, you speak more. You contribute more."

— Jennifer Lee, Disney Animation CCO and *Frozen II* co-director, in the *Hollywood Reporter*



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**"ONE OF THE MOST  
ORIGINAL AND  
CREATIVE  
ANIMATED  
FEATURES I'VE  
EVER SEEN."**

VARIETY



# I LOST MY BODY

**6** ANNIE AWARD NOMINATIONS  
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**WINNER - BEST MUSIC/SCORE**

LOS ANGELES FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

**N**

NETFLIXGUILDS.COM



# February Planner

**1** The Writers Guild Awards continues the months-long Hollywood kudos frenzy. Usual suspects *Bob's Burgers*, *The Simpsons* and *BoJack Horseman* are up in the Animation category. [awards.wga.org]



**2** The gold rush rolls on at the **EE British Academy Film Awards** in London, hosted by Graham Norton.



**4** Light Chaser Animation's *Whitesnake* slithers to Blu-ray + DVD through GKIDS and Shout! Factory.



**5** Happy 59th birthday to **Bruce Timm**!



**7** Margot Robbie stars as DC villainess Harley Quinn in Cathy Yan's *Birds of Prey*, with Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Jurnee Smollett-Bell, Rosie Perez and Ewan McGregor.



**9** Find out which animated movie and short will take home Oscars at the **92nd Academy Awards**, broadcast live on ABC. [oscars.org]



**10** It's time to meet up with kids program creators and execs at **Kidscreen Summit**, held at the Intercontinental Hotel in Miami. [summit.kidscreen.com/2020]



**14** Will the world fall in love with the new and improved *Sonic the Hedgehog*? Director Jeff Fowler and stars Jim Carrey, Tika Sumpter and James Marsden hope so.



**20** It's time for the **70th Berlinale and European Film Market** in Germany. Helen Mirren is receiving the Golden Bear for Lifetime Achievement at the festival, which runs through March 1. [berlinale.de]



**21** *Lilo & Stitch* director Chris Sanders tries his hand at live action with a new adaptation of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, starring



Harrison Ford and a beautiful CG sled dog. Catch some of the best animated features from all over the world at the three-week **New York Int'l Children's Film Festival**. Or, head to Brussels for the artsy and eclectic **39th Anima** fest. [nyicff.org | animafestival.be]



**22** Find out about the hottest toys and tie-ins before everyone else at this year's **New York Toy Fair**, held at the Javits Center. [toyfairny.com]



**25** Well Go USA unleashes China's most popular demon *Ne Zha* on DVD/Blu-ray.

**28** Canterbury, U.K. hosts the 2020 edition of its **Anifest** for three days. It's also the date of France's most prestigious film awards, the **Césars**. [canterburyanifest.com | academie-cinema.org]



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail [edit@animationmagazine.net](mailto:edit@animationmagazine.net).



# Stuff We Love

## STUFF TO WATCH

### The Addams Family



[Universal, D  
\$30 | BD  
\$35]  
Reconnect  
with Gomez  
(Oscar

Isaac), Morticia (Charlize Theron), Wednesday (Chloë Grace Moretz), Pugsley (Finn Wolfhard), Fester (Nick Kroll) Grandmama (Bette Midler) and Cousin Itt (Snoop Dogg) in this modern macabre family comedy. MGM's update on the characters, directed by Conrad Vernon and Greg Tiernan, pits the outlandish clan against a reality TV host (Allison Janney) with a passion for conformity. The release includes deleted/extended scenes, BTS featurettes and lyric videos for original tracks 'Haunted Heart' and 'My Family'. [Jan. 21]

### Joker [WB, D \$29 | BD



\$36 | 4K  
\$30] The  
impact of  
director  
Todd  
Phillips'

unnervingly realistic origin story for the iconic Batman villain, and the ferocious performance given by star Joaquin Phoenix, have been talked up plenty since the film's award-winning Venice film fest premiere, so I won't belabor the point. But! The pic is also a bit of a masterclass on the pervasiveness (and near-invisibility) of modern VFX work. From dressing a believable 1980s Gotham to finessing the film's more brutal moments, there's a lot more CG wizardry going on than a single viewing would reveal. [Jan. 7]

### Maleficent: Mistress of Evil



[Disney,  
BD \$25 |  
4K \$30]  
Angelina  
Jolie is

back in black and flexing her dark fairy wings with even more effects power. Helmed by Joachim Rønning, the sequel sees Maleficent living a peaceful life as protectress of the Moors, until Aurora (Elle Fanning) announces her engagement, and her new mother-in-law (Michelle Pfeiffer) devises a plan to permanently part the worlds of humans and fairies. Special features include extended scenes, outtakes, an illuminating VFX reel and deeper dives into the film's magical world. Fans can also opt

for the Best Buy SteelBook set or the Target exclusive with filmmaker gallery book. [Jan. 14]

### Summer Days with Coo



[Shout!, BD  
\$27] When  
fourth-grad-  
er Koichi  
accidentally  
picks up a

long-hibernating baby Kappa, the two become the best of friends! But, the creature dubbed Coo struggles to adjust to life in suburban Tokyo and gets homesick, spurring Koichi to take Coo on one final road trip adventure in search of other Kappa. This earlier film by Keiichi Hara (*Miss Hokusai*) and studio Shin-Ei is getting a sleek Blu-ray treatment from GKIDS, with deleted scenes and premiere Q&A with the cast. [Jan. 21]

More to love... *Gemini Man* [Paramount]; *Pokémon: Diamond and Pearl - Battle Dimension Complete Collection* [WB]; *Galaxy Express 999: Eternal Fantasy*, *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* 4K, *God Mazinger: The Complete Collection*, *Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo: The Complete Series* [Discotek]; *Space Dandy: The Complete Series*, *Yu Yu Hakusho: The Complete Third Season* [FUNimation]; *Jolo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond Is Unbreakable Pt. 2* LE [VIZ]; *Edison & Leo* BD [Bayview] ... and the very meta SRS Cinema release *Bad CGI Sharks. The Art of Death*



## STUFF TO READ

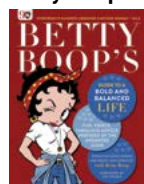
### Stranding [Titan Books, \$40] Uncover the secrets behind the



much-lauded artistry and storycraft of legendary game creator Hideo Kojima's latest feat. The genre-defying PS4 title follows a man's journey across an apocalyptic landscape in a desperate bid to save mankind from extinction. Supernatural forces, spectral

creatures and mass extinction threaten our hero — and offer the artists (including the acclaimed concept designer Yoji Shinkawa) plenty to play with. [Jan. 28]

### Betty Boop's Guide to a Bold and Balanced Life [Skyhorse, \$20]



From her origins as Fleischer's iconic flapper to inspiring bold looks on 21st century catwalks, Betty Boop has resonated with fans for 90 years. This book draws on her classic cartoons to deliver lessons in self-confidence, independence, kindness, and other key elements of a fierce and fab life. The colorful

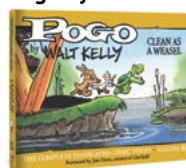
224-pager is penned by Susan Wilking Horan — author, attorney, businesswoman and three-time cancer survivor who with her husband Mark Fleischer and partners has helped Betty Boop attain soaring international fame in the new millennium — and writer/inspirational speaker Kristi Ling Spencer. [Jan. 21]

### PERSONA 5 the Animation: The Artworks [PIE International, \$40]



Fans of the hit game and anime series as well as aspiring animators, illustrators, and those just plain curious about how Japanese studios (specifically, CloverWorks) operate will surely have their hearts stolen by the "Phantom Thieves" in this long-awaited, complete reference. The oversized, 272-page tome collects development artwork for characters, props and backgrounds and never-before-seen illustrations, as well as an exclusive interview with director Masashi Ishihama. [Jan. 7]

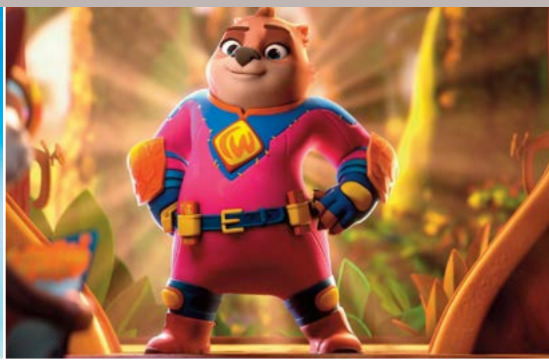
### Pogo by Walt Kelly: Clean as a Weasel - The Complete Syndicated



**Comic Strips Vol. 6** [Fantagraphics, \$45] Take a mosey down to Okefenokee Swamp with the dear, funny critters of one of the 20th century's most beloved and influential comic strips. This hefty hardcover presents 1959-1960, with all 104 Sunday strips in full color for the first time

since their original runs. In this installment (also available in a double box set with Vol. 5), Albert Alligator and Beauregard Bugleboy fend off a man from Mars, Howland Owl investigates Communist espionage in the post office, and Fremont the Bugboy runs for president. Hm... maybe history is a cycle... [Jan. 14] ♦





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TALES FROM  
SANCTUARY CITY

# THE WISHMAS TREE

SCREEN AUSTRALIA SCREEN QUEENSLAND AND LIKE A PHOTON CREATIVE PRESENT "THE WISHMAS TREE" MIRANDA TAPSELL ROSS NOBLE KATE MURPHY

MUSIC BY PEX KINMONTH EDITOR AHMAD TALANI EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STEPHEN GREGG PRODUCED BY RYAN GREAVES

PRODUCED BY JULIA ADAMS MATT EVERITT  
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PRODUCED BY KRISTEN SOUVALS NAOMIE BATES  
DIRECTED BY RICARDO CUSSO





# How to Save an Animation Department

By Don Iwerks



**A Brilliant Mind:** Don Iwerks writes about his father, Ub Iwerks (pictured here with Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse) and his many inventions in his insightful new book.

The following is an excerpt from Don Iwerks' wonderful and insightful new book **Walt Disney's Ultimate Inventor: The Genius of Ub Iwerks** (Disney Editions, \$40):

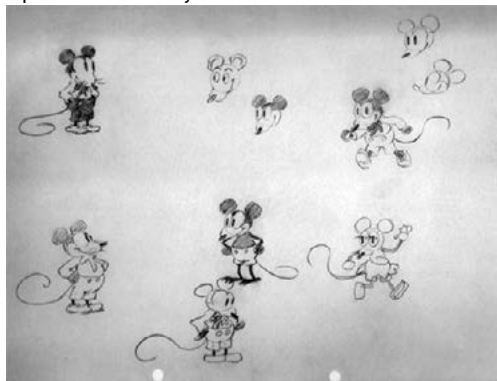
## Laborious Techniques

From the earliest days of animation, making separate drawings for each frame of film was a laborious process. In those days, live-action filming and animation required sixteen frames per second of screen time. For example, a ten-minute short subject required 9,600 original drawings, plus 9,600 traced, inked, and painted cels. When sound was introduced into motion pictures in the late 1920s, the frame rate increased to twenty-four frames per second. At this frame rate, a typical animation feature such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* – with a screen running time of eighty-three minutes – translates into 119,520 cels! To say this was very labor intensive would be an understatement.

## Animation in Peril

Walt's brother Roy, whose job it was to manage the finances, was always concerned with production costs, and the long gap of time during which the money was invested before

realizing a return. In the early 1950s, Roy and Ub happened to be talking, when Roy mentioned to Ub that because of costs, he was going to recommend to Walt that the studio stop the further production of animated shorts. The studio was beginning to produce live-action films, which did not tie up the financing for as long a period of time as the animated productions. Roy would recommend to Walt



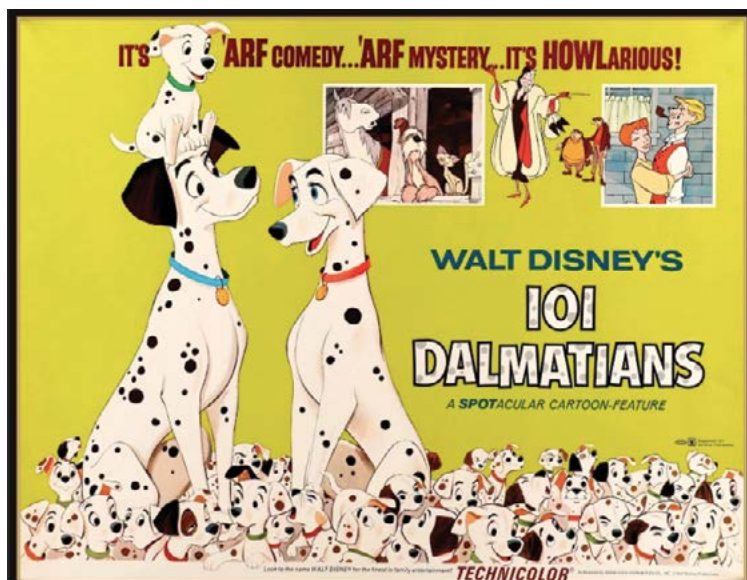
Prior to working in visual effects, Ub Iwerks was largely responsible for creating characters such as Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, Flip the Frog and Mickey Mouse.

that animated films be curtailed in favor of live-action films.

That conversation left Ub thinking about how some savings could be made in the animation process.

Ironically, at about this time, the Xerox Corporation had introduced the revolutionary Xerox 914, the first plain paper photocopier, which printed images using an electrically charged drum and dry powder "toner." Ub reasoned that the Xerox system might work to replace the process of tracing and inking cels, so he purchased a desktop copier and proceeded to make some tests.

After these initial tests looked promising, he borrowed a scene of drawings from the Camera Department and proceeded to make Xerox copies on cel material. Ub then asked the Ink and Paint Department to paint the cels, and next had the scene photographed in the Camera Department. After his own private screening of the test, he felt that it was time to show it to Walt.



After dailies one afternoon, Ub mentioned to Walt that he had a test he would like to show him. As the scene was running, Ub explained how the Xerox process was used to produce the “inked” cels. It didn’t take long for Walt to recognize that this was a technical and economic breakthrough.

Walt asked Ub to develop this method and see if it could be adapted for production use. The process was stripped down into the basic functions that take place within a photocopier. Ub consulted with Xerox about his ideas, and together the system was built and integrated into the Disney animation process.

### Streamlining a New Method

In order to copy large quantities of drawings onto cels, the system had to operate as efficiently as an automobile production line. Ub took this into account and worked out the details. His plan called for one of the corridors in the Ink and Paint Department to be converted into three separate rooms.

The “camera room,” which emerged from this directive, consisted of a long darkroom with a safelight and included a lens and shutter mechanism mounted into the wall at one end of the room. The lens focused on an illuminated drawing held in a platen in an adjacent room known as the “light side.”

Inside the camera room, the lens focused an image of the drawing onto an aluminum plate with a selenium coating held on the camera platen.

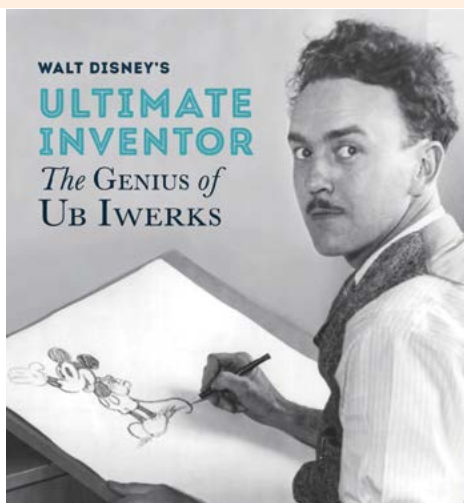
Located next to the camera was a “charger” that applied an electrical charge to the selenium-coated plate prior to exposure. After exposure, the plate was positioned in the rocking tray of the “cascader” that applied the black

powder to the exposed plate. As the tray would rock, the black powder would cascade back and forth across the plate leaving powder adhering to areas where the electrical charge remained. (Light reflected from the white areas of the drawing removes the charge from the selenium-coated plate.) The remaining lines corresponded to the pencil lines in the original drawing, and were an exact copy.

A moving belt then transported the plate through a slit in the wall into an adjoining lighted room where the black powder was touched up, and unwanted powder was removed with cotton or cotton swabs.

The next step was the “transfer” machine,

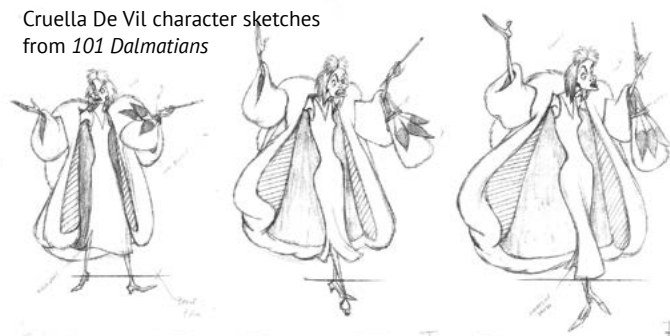
‘Ub’s adaption of the Xerox process not only saved animation at the studio, but rapidly became an industry tool and is still in limited use today, having now been largely replaced by computers.’



which transferred the black powder image from the plate to a cel using static electricity.

After further touch-up, the cel went to the “fuser” machine, which chemically fixed the image to the cel. The selenium plate was then run through the “cleaning” machine brushing off the remaining black powder with a large revolving fur roller, and returned to the cam-

Cruella De Vil character sketches from *101 Dalmatians*



era room via a second moving belt. The plates were stored by the camera, and when needed were recharged, ready to be exposed again.

A useful side benefit of the Xerox system was the ability to enlarge or reduce the image of the drawing by moving the camera room platen. This was similar in function to a modern zoom lens.

The process garnered mixed reviews from the animators. Some were very enthusiastic because it was actually their line drawings being copied, and not traced over by another person. Other animators favored the cleaner black inked lines of traditional inking. But the cost reductions and production efficiency were more than an argument in favor of the new method.

The process was initially tested on select scenes in *Sleeping Beauty*, notably the crowd scenes where there were many faces to be traced. The Academy Award-nominated 1960 short subject *Go-liath II* was the first film to fully use the Xerox process in animation.

For Disney’s next animated feature film, *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, the Xerox process was employed for the entire picture.

### Xerox Production Escalation

To accommodate increased production, a second and third Xerox camera were constructed, followed by a fourth camera that was dedicated to 1:1 (same size) reproduction. Several more of the inking corridors in the Ink and Paint Department were transformed to accommodate the new Xerox cameras. The cost savings came primarily from increased production rather than a reduction in personnel, as the inkers who would have been displaced by the process were instead trained to operate the camera and the other associated components.

Ub’s adaption of the Xerox process not only saved animation at the studio, but rapidly became an industry tool and is still in limited use today, having now been largely replaced by computers. ♦



In Memoriam:

# Animation & VFX Greats We Lost in 2019

These past 12 months, we had to say goodbye to many talented men and women who made our favorite art form, and our world as a whole, so much richer and better with their contributions. We honor their memory on these pages and thank them for giving us so many wonderful animated moments. We are grateful to Tom Sito, who produces an Animation Afternoon of remembrance each year to celebrate the lives and art of these individuals. This year, the event will be held at noon on Saturday, February 29 at the Animation Guild in Burbank.



Richard Williams



Russi Taylor



Kyoto Arson tribute



Peter Mayhew



Suzan Pitt



Caroll Spinney



Kaj Pindal

**René Auberjonois.** Honey-voiced stage and screen actor who is best known for his roles in the movie *M\*A\*S\*H* and TV series such as *Benson*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Boston Legal*. He lent his voice to Chef Louis in *The Little Mermaid* and numerous other characters in *Ben 10: Omniverse*, *Pound Puppies*, *Archer*, *The Looney Tunes Show*, *Young Justice*, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Family Guy*, *Duck Dodgers*, *Justice League*, *The Legend of Tarzan*, *The Wild Thornberrys*, *Men in Black: The Series* and *Batman: The Animated Series*. Died Dec. 8, age 79.

**Robert Axelrod.** Veteran actor who voiced Lord Zedd and Finister (*Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*) and Wizardmon (*Digimon*). Died Sept. 7, age 70.

**Edle Bakke.** Pioneering woman who was the first person at Disney to train as live-action script supervisor. Worked on *Old Yeller*, *Davy Crockett*, *The Hardy Boys*, *Zorro*, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, *Escape to Witch Mountain*, *TRON* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Died March 10, age 91.

**Bruce Bickford.** Indie Seattle-based claymation director, who collaborated with Frank Zappa on the movies *The Amazing Mr. Bickford* and *Baby Snakes*. Other works include *Prometheus' Garden*, *Monster Road* and *Cas'l*. Died April 28, age 72.

**Bradley Bolke.** Actor best known for voicing Chumley the Walrus in the

*Tennessee Tuxedo and His Tales* series. Died Jan. 15, age 94.

**Gordon Bressack.** Three-time Emmy-winning writer best known for shows such as *Pinky and the Brain*, *Animaniacs* and *Pinky, Elmyra and the Brain*. Also wrote for *Jimmy Neutron*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The Smurfs* and co-wrote the feature *CarGo* with his son James Cullen Bressak, who directed the film. Died May 25, age 68.

**John Carl Buechler.** Special effects artist, director, producer, writer and actor who was best known for directing *Troll*, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Part VII*, *Dolls*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4*, *Halloween 4* and *Hatchet*. Died March 18, age 67.

**James Frawley.** Prolific TV and film director, who helmed the 1979 Henson pic *The Muppet Movie* and won an Emmy for directing the pilot episode of *The Monkees*. Died, Jan. 22, age 82

**Rutger Hauer.** Popular Dutch character actor, best known for portraying the replicant Roy Batty in Ridley Scott's 1982 classic *Blade Runner*. He had many memorable roles in titles such as *Soldier of Orange*, *Ladyhawke*, *The Osterman Weekend*, *The Hitcher*, *Hobo with a Shotgun*, *Escape from Sobibor* and *Sin City*. Died July 19, age 75.

**Kyoto Animation Arson Victims.** The 36 employees of Kyoto Animation studio who died as the result of the fire started by an arsonist on July 18. In a show of resilience, the studio announced that it will continue to offer training programs for aspiring animators in 2020.

**Art Lozzi.** Veteran background artist who worked on numerous Hanna-Barbera shows and movies including *Quick Draw McGraw*, *The Huckleberry Hound Show*, *Snagglepuss*, *Top Cat*, *The Jetsons*, *The Flintstones*, *A Man Called Flintstone*, *Space Ghost*, *The Archies* and *The Batman/Superman Hour*. Died Nov. 4., age 90.

**Don Lusk.** Animator and director who worked on many Disney classics, from *Ferdinand the Bull* to *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*. After leaving Disney in 1960, he directed many TV series and specials, including *Peanuts* specials and cartoons such as *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons*, *Scooby-Doo*, *The Smurfs* and *Tom and Jerry*. Died Dec. 24, 2018, at age 108.

**Peter Mayhew.** English-American actor best known for portraying the much-loved Chewbacca character in the *Star Wars* series from 1977 to 2015. Died April 30, age 74.

**J. Mike Mendel.** Emmy-winning animation producer who worked on *The Simpsons* and *Rick and Morty*. Died Sept. 27, age 54

**Ron Miller.** Former president and COO of Walt Disney Productions from 1978 to 1984. Ron was married to Diane Disney, Walt's older daughter. He worked as producer and exec producer of Disney pics such as *Fox and the Hound*, *The Black Cauldron*, *TRON*, *That Darn Cat!*, *Escape from Witch Mountain* and *Freaky Friday*. Died Feb. 9, age 85.

**Ram Mohan.** Indian animator, title designer and educator who was known as the father of Indian animation. He was chairman and CCO at Mumbai-based Graphiti Multimedia and the founder of Graphiti School of Animation. Among his best-known films were *You Said It*, *Fire Games*, *This Our India* and *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama*. Died Oct. 11, age 88.

**Kaj Pindal.** Danish-born Canadian cartoonist, animator and educator who worked at the National Film Board of Canada and directed the Oscar-nominated *What on Earth!* and the 1988 NFB short *Peep and the Big Wide World*, which inspired the PBS TV series. Died June 28, age 91.

**Suzan Pitt.** Celebrated American animator, painter and educator (CalArts), who also created animated pieces for operas. Her best-known film, *Asparagus*, debuted as part of an installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art and screened with David Lynch's *Eraserhead* for two years. Other shorts included *Joy Street*, *El Doctor* and *Pinball*. Died June 19, age 75

**Monkey Punch.** Born Kazuhiko Katō. Japanese manga artist best known for his globally popular series *Lupin III*. Died April 11, age 82.

**Milton Quon.** Disney animator, artist and actor, who worked on *Fantasia* and *Dumbo*. He was also the first Chinese-American art director at a national ad agency (BBDO). He appeared as an actor in *Speed* and *Sweet Jane*. Died June 18, age 105.

**Chris Reccardi.** Acclaimed animation director, graphic designer, character designer, musician, producer, writer and storyboard artist who worked on shows such as *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, *Samurai Jack*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Tiny Toon Adventures*, directed episodes of *SpongeBob SquarePants* and was also supervising producer for *Regular Show* and creative director of *Secret Mountain Fort Awesome*. Died May 2, age 54.

**Børge Ring.** Danish animator and director who worked on the animated movie *The Tinderbox*, worked for Disney in London and directed the Oscar-nominated short *Oh My Darling* (1978), the Oscar-winning *Anna & Bella* (1985) and the UNICEF Award-winning short *Run of the Mill*. He also worked on *It's the Great Pumpkin*, *Charlie Brown*, *Heavy Metal* and *We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story*. Died Dec. 27, 2018, at age 97.

**Stu Rosen.** Voice and casting director, actor and exec producer, who created and hosted the Emmy-winning children's puppet show *Dusty's Playhouse*. Credits included *MASK*, *Fraggle Rock*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *2 Stupid Dogs*, *Biker Mice from Mars*, *Batman: The Animated Series* and *Superman: The Animated Series*. Died August 4, age 80.

**Rosto.** Dutch artist and filmmaker best known for his award-winning short trilogy and online graphic novel *Mind My Gap*. Among his acclaimed animated projects where *No Place Like Home* (2008), *The Monster of Nix* (2011), *Lonely Bones* (2013) and *Reruns* (2018), all of which played in festivals around the world. Died March 7, age 50.

**Dave Smith.** Beloved Walt Disney Archives founder who spent 40 years cataloging and preserving the studio's rich legacy of entertainment. Was named a Disney Legend in 2007. Author of numerous books, including the company's official encyclopedia *Disney A to Z*, *Disney: The First 100 Years*, *The Quotable Walt Disney*, *Disney Trivia from the Vault* and *The Ultimate Disney Trivia Book*. Died Feb. 15, age 78.

**Caroll Spinney.** Beloved Emmy-winning actor and puppeteer who played Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch from 1969 to 2018 on TV's *Sesame Street* and in movies such as *The Muppet Movie*, *The Great Muppet Caper*, *Follow That Bird* and *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*. Died Dec. 8, age 85.





Alan Zaslove



Art Lozzi



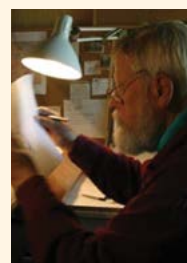
Robert Axelrod



Edie Bakke



Bruce Bickford



Børge Ring



René Auberjonois



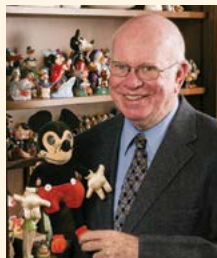
Bradley Bolke



Chris Reccardi



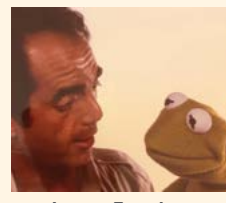
Danny Gordon Taylor



Dave Smith



Don Lusk



James Frawley



Stu Rosen



Gordon Bressack



John Carl Buechler



John Witherspoon



J. Mike Mendel



Monkey Punch



Milton Quon



Ram Mohan



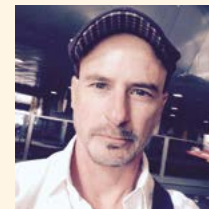
Ron Miller



Rosto



Rutger Hauer



Ted Stearn

**Ted Stearn.** Creator of the alternative comic *Fuzz & Pluck* and art director and storyboard artist on many primetime animated series. Credits included *Rick and Morty*, *Daria*, *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *King of the Hill*, *Futurama*, *Drawn Together*, *Animals*, *Squirrel Boy* and *The Simpsons Movie*. Died Feb. 1, age 57.

**Danny Gordon Taylor.** Animation supervisor and VFX professional who worked at ILM, WETA and Digital Domain on numerous acclaimed blockbuster movies. He earned an Oscar nomination for his work on *Real Steel*. Among his other works: *The Mask*, *Jumanji*, *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, *Terminator 3*, *Transformers*, *The Hobbit*, *The Jungle Book*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* and *Alita: Battle Angel*. Died July 10, age 69.

**Russi Taylor.** Voice actress and Disney Legend, best known for voicing Minnie Mouse for 30 years. She was also the voice of Strawberry Shortcake and many other characters from shows such as *The Flintstone Comedy Show*, *The Smurfs*, *My Little Pony*, *Muppet Babies*, *DuckTales* (in which she played all three nephews) and *The Simpsons* (Martin Prince and Sherri & Terri). Other credits included *The Rescuers Down Under*, *TaleSpin*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command*, *Kim Possible*, *Sofia the First*, *The Lion Guard* and *Tangled: The Series*. Taylor was predeceased by her husband, Wayne Allwine (the third voice of Mickey Mouse), who died in 2009. Died July 26, age 75.

**Richard Williams.** Renowned Canadian-British animator, director and writer best known for serving as animation director on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1998), for which he won two Oscars, and for his unfinished feature *The Thief and the Cobbler* (1993). He also created the title sequences to *What's New Pussycat*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and two of the later *Pink Panther* movies. He directed the Oscar- and BAFTA-nominated short *Prologue*. Author of the *The Animator's Survival Kit*. Died August 16, age 86.

**John Witherspoon.** Actor and stand-up comedian who played Ice Cube's grouchy father in the *Friday* movies. He voiced Gramps on the animated series *The Boondocks*. Died Oct. 29, age 77.

**Alan Zaslove.** Animator, producer and director of animated series who worked at UPA, Hanna-Barbera and Disney. Zaslove worked on cartoons such as *Gerald McBoing-Boing*, *Mr. Magoo*, *Popeye the Sailor*, *Roger Ramjet*, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *Fractured Fairy Tale* and *George of the Jungle*. At Hanna-Barbera, his credits included *The Smurfs*, *Yogi's Treasure Hunt*, and *The Jetsons* (1985). At Disney, he produced and directed *DuckTales*, *Aladdin*, *Adventures of the Gummi Bears*, *Darkwing Duck*, *Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers*, *The Return of Jafar* and *Pocahontas 2: Journey to a New World*. Also produced and directed *The New Woody Woodpecker Show*. Died Oct. 2, age 91. ♦





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR  
ANNIE  
AWARDS  
NOMINEES  
NETFLIX



## ASK THE STORYBOTS

BEST TV/MEDIA - PRESCHOOL  
BEST CHARACTER ANIMATION - TV/MEDIA  
BEST DIRECTION - TV/MEDIA

## BIG MOUTH

BEST TV/MEDIA - GENERAL AUDIENCE

## BOJACK HORSEMAN

BEST TV/MEDIA - GENERAL AUDIENCE  
BEST WRITING - TV/MEDIA

## CARMEN SANDIEGO

BEST CHARACTER DESIGN - TV/MEDIA  
BEST MUSIC - TV/MEDIA  
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN - TV/MEDIA  
BEST STORYBOARDING - TV/MEDIA

## CAROLE & TUESDAY

BEST STORYBOARDING - TV/MEDIA

## GREEN EGGS AND HAM

BEST EDITORIAL - TV/MEDIA

## INVADER ZIM: ENTER THE FLORPUS

BEST VOICE ACTING - FEATURE

## LOVE, DEATH & ROBOTS

BEST FX FOR TV/MEDIA  
BEST MUSIC - TV/MEDIA  
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN - TV/MEDIA  
BEST STORYBOARDING - TV/MEDIA  
BEST EDITORIAL - TV/MEDIA

## PINKY MALINKY

BEST WRITING - TV/MEDIA

## RILAKKUMA & KAORU

BEST DIRECTION - TV/MEDIA

## SEIS MANOS

BEST MUSIC - TV/MEDIA

## SHE-RA AND THE PRINCESSES OF POWER

BEST MUSIC - TV/MEDIA

## TALES OF ARCADIA: 3BELOW

BEST TV/MEDIA - CHILDREN  
BEST FX FOR TV/MEDIA

## TUCA & BERTIE

BEST TV/MEDIA - GENERAL AUDIENCE  
BEST VOICE ACTING - TV/MEDIA  
BEST WRITING - TV/MEDIA

## ULTRAMAN

BEST DIRECTION - TV/MEDIA





## Congratulations to all our Animag's Best of 2019 Award Winners.

These year-end honors were determined by our readers who picked their favorites during the voting period (Nov. 20- Dec. 10). Thanks to all of you for keeping us entertained and inspired all year long!

### **Best Animated Feature (Major Studio)**

*Klaus* (Netflix)

Runner Up: *Toy Story 4* (Disney/Pixar)

### **Best Animated Feature (Indie/Intl.)**

*Missing Link* (LAIKA)

Runner Up: *I Lost My Body* (Xilam/  
Netflix)

### **Best Animated Short**

*Hair Love* (Sony)

Runner Up: *Kitbull* (Pixar)

### **Best New Animated Series**

*Love, Death + Robots* (Netflix)

Runner Up: *Infinity Train* (Cartoon Net-  
work)

### **Best Primetime TV Series**

*Rick and Morty* (Cartoon Network)

Runner Up: *Bob's Burgers* (FOX)

### **Best Family TV Series**

*Steven Universe* (Cartoon Network)

Runner Up: *We Bare Bears* (Cartoon  
Network)





**Best Preschool Show**

*Ask the Storybots* (JibJab Media, Netflix)  
 Runner Up: *Arthur* (9 Story Media, WGBH)

**Best Major Studio**

Pixar  
 Runner Up: DreamWorks

**Best Indie Studio**

LAIKA  
 Runner Up: GKIDS

**Best Animation Outlet**

Netflix  
 Runner Up: Cartoon Network

**Best Feature Director**

Tie: Sergio Pablos (*Klaus*) and Makoto Shinkai (*Weathering with You*)  
 Runners Up: Jennifer Lee & Chris Buck (*Frozen II*)

**Best Showrunner/Creator**

Genndy Tartakovsky (*Primal*)  
 Runner Up: Rebecca Sugar (*Steven Universe*)

**Best Voice Over Artist**

Tie: Tara Strong and Tony Hale  
 Runner Up: Aimee Carrero

**Best Animation Software**

Toon Boom Harmony  
 Runner Up: Maya

**Best Animation School**

CalArts  
 Runner Up: Savannah College of Art and Design

**Best Intl. TV Animation Player**

Cartoon Saloon  
 Runner Up: CAKE

**Best Conference, Event or Festival**

Annecy Festival and Market  
 Runner Up: MIP Junior





# Dutch Dynamos

Submarine, the Amsterdam studio behind acclaimed projects like *Undone* and *Where Is Anne Frank*, celebrates two decades of innovation.



This month, Amsterdam-based animation studio Submarine is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its launch. Since its inception, the studio has been on the forefront of mixing different animation styles and producing content for a wide variety of audiences around this world. This past year, the studio was a key player in producing the animation for Amazon's acclaimed new series *Undone*

and the European Animation Award winning feature *Bunuel in the Labyrinth of the Elephants*. We caught up with the studio's co-founders **Femke Wolting** and **Bruno Felix** to find out what's on tap for the innovative shop in 2020 and beyond:

**Animag: Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the studio?**

From inception, Submarine has been a hybrid company mixing disciplines – blurring the lines between documentary, animation and interactive projects. In the early 2000s we made an animated documentary about the history of sneakers as cultural icons, using animation mixed with archive footage which is an early example of how we work blending these tools. Some of our other initial projects



include an interactive motion comic adaptation of *The Killer* by Matz and artist Luc Jacamon, before we moved into linear animation with children's series *Kika and Bob*. The studio really was born out of us applying animation to documentary and interactive projects and it grew from there.

**Can you talk about your principle of breaking the boundaries of what animation can and cannot do?**

Starting the company – Bruno and I loved design and graphic novels and wanted to use animation outside the confines of children's programming and cartoons as a tool for storytelling. We also launched a website called "Forget the Film, Watch the Titles" – because of our love of title design and animation. That also speaks to our interests in the intersection of film, animation and graphic design which has driven our creative work from the start. We grew up at a time where production tools became digital, so it was a burgeoning of possibilities – all these genres that were quite separate now became easier to combine. Exploring the new language of visual storytelling that this gave rise to is really why we started the studio. From the start we had the ambition to work for a worldwide audience. We produced many children's series in co-production with broadcasters around Europe, and our work with the global streamers began in 2016 when we produced Mattel's *Wellie Wishers* series for young audiences on Amazon Prime.

**You seem to have quite an eclectic slate of interesting, original animated projects on your current slate. Can you tell us what makes an ideal Submarine project?**

We love interesting stories: We like to be innovative in our visual storytelling and mainly focus on contemporary tales with resonance in the world today. We want to tell stories about the times we live in, in visually striking ways – "*The Last Hijack*" was a film about Somali pirates which explores themes around globalisation and crime but in a really imaginative way – similarly with *Undone* we are pushing the boundaries of a traditional scripted series.

**How many are employed at the company, and what are some of the animation tools you use in your projects?**

We're one of the biggest independent companies in the Netherlands, we have a permanent staff of about 25 people but that fluctuates



Femke Wolting



Bruno Felix

with productions – it peaks around 100 people depending on the project. We do 2D, 3D, rotoscope, stop-motion – we're a multi-disciplinary studio.

**Can you tell us a little bit about your upcoming projects?**

We're working with the incredible Ari Folman on *Where is Anne Frank*, which looks at a familiar story but in a totally fresh and powerful way, with the emphasis on making it accessible and meaningful to young audiences. We're developing a rotoscope sci-fi YA animated series, for a generation of teenagers who have grown up with animation as an integral part of telling sophisticated stories. We're also starting work on the second season of *Undone* season 2 for Amazon Prime, and a mixed media feature-length reimagining of *Coppelia* shot with the Dutch National Ballet which will feature live-action dancers in an animated environment.

***Undone* has really made a big impression on fans all over the world. How did that project come about?**

We were approached by Tornante, which also produces *BoJack Horseman*, because the showrunners Kate Purdy and Raphael Bob-Waksberg had developed the scripts for *Undone*. They loved the work of director Hisko Hulsing, who was the production designer we worked with on *The Last Hijack*. Tommy Pallotta, co-director of *The Last Hijack* and a frequent Submarine collaborator also produced *A Scanner Darkly* and *Waking Life* and had pioneered a technique of rotoscoping for those films – which Tornante and the creators were keen to use for this series.

**What do you look for in animation partners around the world?**

We have predominantly co-produced which has seen us working with a wide network of European and international partners. For example we are now celebrating a successful

collaboration for the animated feature film *Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles* that we produced together with Spanish producer Manuel Christobal which just won the European Film Award. We are always looking for partnerships where we can collaborate to use animation innovatively, with people who have ideas that excite us. Animation really lends itself to a global audience so we are also keen to develop projects internationally

that can reach a broad spectrum of viewers – which is more and more possible because of streamers.

**What is your take on the state of animation worldwide?**

It's a very exciting time to be working in animation as it's become more accepted as a mainstream form of storytelling and it's used in so many different kinds of projects. There's an enormous freedom and potential to make work in this medium.

**What is the biggest challenge facing an innovative animation studio in Amsterdam?**

We have to be strategic in our partnerships because we rely on coproduction to finance projects fully – the Netherlands is a relatively small country which is why we opened a U.S. office to give us more options for our work. The challenge is balancing the reality of multiple partners and still maintaining an overall creative vision for a piece of work. Having a presence in the U.S. has been instrumental in allowing us to develop more productions for the global streamers.

**Do you get any support from the Dutch government?**

Yes, there is a 30% Dutch tax rebate – which allowed us to finance a substantial part of the budget for *Undone* out of the Netherlands.

**Can you share some of Submarine's interesting plans for 2020 and beyond?**

We will be working on *Undone* season two and focusing on growing our slate with original projects across features, television series and short-form interactive content. We are also starting production on the feature film *Fox & Hare* based on the TV series we just launched, and we are developing the preschool series *Pol the Pirate Mouse* with Gaumont. ♦

**You can find out more about the studio at [submarine.nl](http://submarine.nl)**

# Tunes That Make Toons Fly

The composers of this year's acclaimed animated features draw inspiration from a rich variety of sources.  
by Michael Mallory



Christophe Beck



Frozen II

Feature animation and music have been Oscar-night dates for some eight decades now, and the musical scores for many of this year's top nomination hopefuls are finding their voices — literally. One of this year's strong contenders, Disney's *Frozen II*, features seven new songs by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez — 2014 winners for Best Song — and returning composer Christophe Beck once more called upon the Norwegian female chorus Cantus to flavor and develop his score. "Similar to how Elsa and Anna have grown up since the last film, the new score has also matured and introduces more sophisticated musical concepts and thematic elements," Beck stated.

Other composers are making vocals integral parts of their scores as well. For the indie contender *Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles*, distributed by GK-

IDS, a chorus of voices was employed for a key scene set in a school, in which the impoverished children sing to the main character, shattering his emotional dam. Given the Spanish production's limited budget, composer Arturo Cardelús came up with an ingenious scheme to record the music: he asked a friend at London's Royal Academy of Music to make the choral passage part of the current curriculum. After weeks of rehearsal, the students were taken to Abbey Road Studios to record the piece ... for class credit. "They were 19, 20

[years old] and they were all so excited," Cardelús says. "It was a win-win."

Budget considerations were far less of a prob-

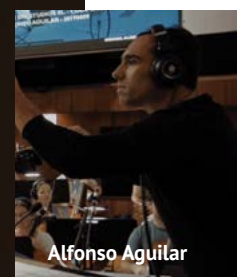
lem for 2011 nominee John Powell, whose score for DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* also drew upon choral passages. "Between *Dragons 2* and *3* I wrote an album of choral music, including a

"The ocarina represents the wind, which is Lydia, Klaus's wife. It sounds amazing because it is very organic and warm, and feels like if you were blowing into your hands."

— Alfonso G. Aguilar, composer, *Klaus*



Klaus



Alfonso Aguilar





John Powell

*How to Train Your Dragon:  
The Hidden World*



Carter Burwell



*Missing Link*

requiem," Powell says. "I spent a lot of time working on my choral writing, and I think it improved number 3." Powell convinced British musician Eric Whitacre, who pioneered the concept of virtual choirs, to provide the voices and conduct the session. "He has his own ensemble of musicians he calls on when he's doing recordings and concerts in Europe," Powell notes. "I saw what a real choral conductor can bring out in a choir: they reacted to every little nuance of his face and fingers."

Powell also collaborated with Icelandic singer/songwriter Jónsi for the music underscoring the hidden world sequence. "We always said his voice is the voice that you recognize as the dragon's voice, so I wanted to do something in that world that would be a metaphor for the dragon's home," Powell says.

### To Shangri La and Beyond

In crafting the score for Laika's *Missing Link*, two-time Oscar nominee Carter Burwell turned to a choir to heighten the aural awe in the climactic sequence set in Shangri La. "The whole movie is about getting to this place,"

Burwell says, "so when we finally get there I thought it was important to have some new, breathtaking elements in the score as a way of amping up the orchestration." The Shangri La sequence features more brass instrumentation, including a bass trombone, which Burwell says "delivers a lot of the very low, profound bass notes." Overall the score relies heavily on strings to emphasize the story's Britishness (it involves a Victorian-era explorer who finds and befriends a homesick Yeti). "[Writer/director Chris Butler] really wanted the film to look and feel like an old, classic British production," the composer states.

"He wanted a traditional sound in the score, but it also harkens back to travelogue adventure films, so as you go through each geographical area you

lend some of the instrumental flavor from that area. When we're in the Pacific Northwest we hear guitar or Native American winds, when you're in India you hear the sitar, and when you get to the Himalayas there are some wind pipes. This is probably the first time I've had such variety in one film."

For Rupert Gregson-Williams, composer of DreamWorks/Pearl Studios' *Abominable*, employing human voices into the score was a way to add maj-

"We always said Jónsi's voice is the voice that you recognize as the dragon's voice, so I wanted to do something in that world that would be a metaphor for the dragon's home."

— John Powell, composers *How to Train Your Dragon 3*



esty to the sound. "Because of the epic size, especially when we get into the Himalayas, I really couldn't resist the choir," he says. "It's a good emotional tool, but it wasn't a representation of any particular character." There was one exception to that: Gregson-Williams' own voice is the representation of the Everest, the soulful Yeti befriended in the film by a young girl named Yi. The composer provided the creature's signature humming for the production scratch track, only to see it retained in the final product. "I actually tried hard to get the producers to use someone else but they kept coming back and saying, 'But we like it!'" Gregson-Williams says. "I'd say, 'There's someone else out there who could do a better job than me,' but it stuck in the film." While he is actually pleased to have his voice is so completely integrated into the film, the composer/hummer confesses that he had a little help. "I've been asked if I had that sort of range, and my answer is, obviously I don't," he says. "But there was a useful bit of software to help me get down there."

Even more important, though, was creating the violin solo played by Yi, which serves as the emotional core of the score, if not the film itself. "I

met with Jill [Culton, *Abominable's* writer/director] two-and-a-half years ago and we spoke about how the character felt about her violin, her connection to her father, and this tune that she was always reaching to play "a melody that he had taught or had played to her when she was little," he says. "We spoke about different scenes where she would play or quote part of it until it was fully realized at the Leshan Buddha, about three-quarters of the way through the film."

Because the melody was so integral to the story, Gregson-Williams composed it very early on and gave it to the animators, who drew upon video of violinist Charlene Huang to animate the hand movements. "The attention to detail from the animators was amazing," he relates. "Normally in these scenarios, even in live action, you see people playing the fiddle and it's quite embarrassing. They were terrific in animating all the fingerings and bowings as accurately as possible."

### First-Hand Experience

Animators were also concerned with finger positions for the French animated film *I Lost My Body*, from Xilam Animation, but for an entirely different reason. The festival favorite - released in the US by Netflix - is about an ambulatory severed hand. While using voices to represent a hand would

seem incongruous, composer Dan Levy concentrated on different instrumentation and chord progressions to highlight different moods and emotions. "When I started to compose some music for the movie, the storyboard and animatic were very abstract, so I had to use my imagination to envision what the final film would look like," Levy says. "I wanted the music to help guide the audience through the layers of the film with ease. I used the flute to represent childhood, the arpeggio to represent the mechanism of destiny, and strings to represent the love story."

SPA Animation's *Klaus*, which is also being distributed by Netflix, offered composer Alfonso G. Aguilar his first experience scoring an animated film, as well as the chance to employ a super-sized orchestra. "It was huge," Aguilar says, "it was 145 people! [The standard-sized orchestra for a film is 65-to-85 musicians.] What I did was mix many wind instruments so that they sound as if they're only one, and we got that 'Northern' sound." To high-

light that sound Aguilar employed an instrument that is very unusual for a symphonic orchestra: an ocarina. "The ocarina represents the wind," he explains, "which is Lydia, Klaus's wife. It sounds amaz-

ing because it is very organic and warm, and feels like if you were blowing into your hands."

The composer cites a sequence in which the frosty townspeople began to thaw a bit as the biggest challenge of the film. "It's the point in which the town starts evolving from the evil and the war ambiance that they had into kindness," he says. "The name of the sequence is 'Changes,' and it's funny because we changed the cue 42 times until we arrived at the concept." Aguilar adds that he rewrote one of the discarded versions to create a separate suite that is not in the film, but will be included on the album.

Any discussion of music scoring has to include serial nominee Randy Newman (winner for *Monsters, Inc.* and *Toy Story 3*), who is back this year for Disney/Pixar's *Toy Story 4*. Newman's biggest competition for that, however, is not any of the other animated feature composers, but rather himself, given the buzz (pun intended) his score for the live action dramedy *Marriage Story* has been generating.

The time between the announcement of 2020 nominees and the Oscar-cast on February 9 is shorter than ever, a little under a month. It's safe to bet, though, that some animation composers will spend those weeks singing. Maybe even humming. ♦

"I wanted the music to help guide the audience through the layers of the film with ease. I used the flute to represent childhood, the arpeggio to represent the mechanism of destiny, and strings to represent the love story."

— Dan Levy, composer, *I Lost My Body*



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The 47th edition of the Annie Awards celebrates all the talented people who entertained and inspired us all year long.

If there's one night that unites all of animation's different sectors and community members, it's the Annie Awards. The annual event presented by the good people at ASIFA-Hollywood is a wonderful chance to catch up with everyone in the industry and pay tribute to some of the best work done by our talented peers throughout the year. With so many top-notch movies, TV shows, shorts and special projects produced this year, the star-studded ceremony on Jan. 25 promises to be another one for the books.

"This year saw a 20 percent increase in submissions, with over 1,900 worldwide entries," says ASIFA-Hollywood's executive director, Frank Gladstone. "That was a lot of work for our nomination committees and they have come up with a wide and varied selection for our members to vote on, including films using a vast array of techniques, designs and storytelling points of view, which will make this year's Annie ballot both interesting and full of insight into the creative possibilities of our art form."

With titles such as *Klaus*, *Missing Link* and *I Lost My Body* competing against blockbuster franchise faves such as *Frozen II*, *Toy Story 4* and *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*, it's getting harder to define what is an indie movie and what is a big studio picture. As ASIFA president and animation historian Jerry Beck points out, "*Klaus* and *Missing Link* are technically indies, and yet they are backed by major Hollywood studios (Netflix and Laika Studios/United Artists, respectively). And in our Feature Independent category, the anime films are as mainstream as any commercial productions."

Beck says the blending of the two makes him happy. "Animation will always be independent and animators will always be artists," he says. "The projects the animators align themselves to can be big or small, popular or personal. It's the craft we celebrate with the Annies. It's exciting. I see growth and progression each and every year – and with this year's crop of nominees, the cup runneth over."

## A Star-Filled Stage

The award ceremony will continue its no-host policy that was established a couple of years ago. Beck says he loves seeing a variety of presenters on stage, especially the animators themselves: "As they used to say, 'animators are actors with a pencil.' I suppose today they'd say 'actors



with a pixel' – but many in our community love to performance make great hosts themselves. Of course we will have an array of more well-known voice actors and some surprise star power. Mainstream Hollywood has embraced animation more than ever, and you'll see that reflected at the Annies."

Of course, one of the main challenges of recognizing good work is having to leave some amazing projects out. "The toughest part in recent years is that so many really good films, TV and short films didn't get nominated," says Beck. "It's tough to have to turn away so many outstanding potential nominees. It's an embarrassment of riches. We really are in a new 'Golden Age.' I can think of several animated features that were phenomenal, some incredible TV or internet series that blew me away, and short films in particular – such great work that in another year might have won the top honors. On the flip side, every nominee this year really earned their place." Beck says he considers himself very lucky to preside over the event and not have to do all the hard work. He explains, "We have an incredible staff behind the scenes that pull off the show year after year. Frank Gladstone is our executive director, and Michael Mallory our writer along with Event Director Gretchen Houser and Show Producer Annette O'Neil all deserve the kudos. I love that I just show up, give my little speech on stage and sit back and watch the show like everyone else. Of course the *best* thing about the Annies is the party after the ceremonies on the [UCLA] campus, right outside Royce Hall. It's a who's-who of everyone making animation there. ASIFA-Hollywood thinks of itself as the 'United Nations of Animation.' No matter who you are making your films for, there is no competition here. We are all friends. All one community, celebrating each other."

In addition to producing the well-attended event, ASIFA-Hollywood is also continuing its amazing preservation work all year long. Beck says the org is preserving several personal short films made by Disney artist Eyvind Earle (*Sleeping Beauty*). He adds, "We have discovered (and are preserving) a lost Fleischer Betty Boop cartoon – one that nobody has seen since 1936! We are also working with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in preserving rare animation art. More about this to come!"

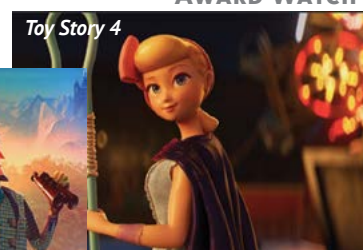
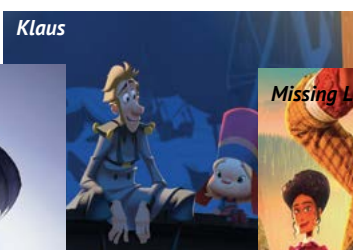
For more info about the event and to purchase tickets, visit [annieawards.org](http://annieawards.org).



**Flashback to the 46th Edition:** Top row from left; Frank Gladstone, Holly Hunter, Jerry Beck and Patrick Warburton entertained the audience. Bottom row: The team behind *BoJack Horseman* picked up the Best General Audience TV Series Annie Award, while *Spider-Verse* directors Peter Ramsey, Bob Persichetti and Rodney Rothman won the Best Feature Directing prize. Disney CCO Jennifer Lee and Pixar CCO Pete Doctor were also part of the celebration.







## Major Categories at a Glance

### Best Animated Studio Feature

*Frozen II* (Disney)  
*How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* (DreamWorks)  
*Klaus* (Netflix/SPA Studios/Atresmedia)  
*Missing Link* (LAIKA)  
*Toy Story 4* (Pixar)

### Best Indie Feature

*Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles* (Sygnatia/Glow/Submarine/Hampa)  
*I Lost My Body* (Xilam for Netflix)  
*Okko's Inn* (Madhouse)  
*Promare* (Trigger/Xflag)  
*Weathering With You* (Toho/ Story/CoMix Wave Films)

### Best Special Productions

*Guava Island "Titles and Prologue"* (Six Point Harness/Amazon)  
*How to Train Your Dragon Homecoming* (DreamWorks Animation)  
*Infinity Train "The Perennial Child"* (Cartoon Network Studios)  
*SpongeBob SquarePants "SpongeBob's Big Birthday Blowout"* (Nickelodeon/ Jonas & Co.)  
*Zog* (Magic Light Pictures)

### Best Short Subject

*Acid Rain* (Animoon)  
*Don't Know What* (Thomas Renoldner)  
*Je sors acheter des cigarettes* (Miyu Productions)  
*Purpleboy* (Bando à Parte/Rainbox Prod./Ambiances asbl/Luna Blue Film)  
*Uncle Thomas: Accounting for the Days* (Ciclope Filmes/National Film Board of Canada/Les Armateurs)

### Best VR

*Bonfire* (Baobab Studios)  
*Gloomy Eyes* (Atlas V)  
*Kaiju Confidential* (ShadowMachine)

### Best TV/Media - Preschool

*Ask the Storybots* (liblab Bros. Studios for Netflix)  
*Elena of Avalor* (Disney Television Animation)  
*Let's Go Luna!* (Brown Bag Films/9 Story Media Group)  
*Norman Picklestripes* (Factory)  
*Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum* (Brown Bag Films/9 Story Media Group)

### Best TV/Media - Children

*Disney Mickey Mouse* (Disney TV Animation/Disney Channel)  
*Niko and the Sword of Light* (Titmouse/Amazon Studios)  
*Rise of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Nickelodeon Animation Studio)  
*Tales of Arcadia: 3Below* (DreamWorks Animation)  
*The Tom and Jerry Show* (Warner Bros. Animation)

### Best TV/Media - General Audience

*Big Mouth* (Netflix)  
*Bolack Horseman* (Tornante Prod., LLC for Netflix)  
*Harley Quinn* (Warner Bros. Animation)  
*Tuca & Bertie* (Tornante Prod., LLC for Netflix)  
*Undone* (Tornante Co. and Amazon Studios)

### Best Student Film

*Con Fuerza* (Savannah College of Art and Design)  
*Gravedad* (Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg GmbH Animationsinstitut)  
*The Fox & The Pigeon* (Sheridan College)  
*Un diable dans la poche* (Gobelins, l'école de l'image)

### Best Direction - Feature

*Frozen II* (Walt Disney Animation Studios)  
 Nominees: Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck  
*I Lost My Body* (Xilam for Netflix)  
 Nominee: Jérémy Clapin  
*Klaus* (Netflix/The SPA Studios/Atresmedia Cine)  
 Nominee: Sergio Pablos  
*Missing Link* (LAIKA, LLC)  
 Nominee: Chris Butler  
*Weathering With You* (Toho Co., Ltd./STORY Inc./CoMix Wave Films)  
 Nominees: Makoto Shinka

### Juried Awards

Juried Awards will also be presented honoring unparalleled achievement and exceptional contributions to animation. Winsor McCay Award recipients have been selected by the AS-IFA-Hollywood Board of Directors for their exemplary industry careers — **Satoshi Kon** (posthumously), Japanese film director, animator, screenwriter and manga artist; **Henry Selick**, director, producer and writer who is best known for directing the stop-motion animation films *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach* and *Coraline*; and **Ron Clements & John Musker**, for more than 30 years one of Walt Disney Animation Studios' leading director teams.

The June Foray Award will be presented to **Jeanette Bonds**, writer, independent animator and co-founder and director of GLAS Animation; and the Ub Iwerks Award will be presented to **Jim Blinn**, computer scientist who first became widely known for his work as a computer graphics expert at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), particularly his work on the pre-encounter animations for the Voyager project. ♦

# The Final 10

Last month, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences revealed its 10-title shortlist of projects under consideration for nomination in the Best Animated Shorts category at the 92nd Oscars. Here is a quick recap of these selected films and a rundown of some of the awards they have picked up along the way on the way to the big night.

Nomination voting will be open Jan. 2-7, and the list of nominees will be announced on Jan. 13 and final Oscar voting will be open Jan. 30 – Feb. 4. The 92nd Academy Awards will take place on Sunday, Feb. 9 at the Dolby Theater (Hollywood & Highland Center) in Hollywood, and will be televised live on ABC. Here are the 10 contenders:

## Daughter (Dcera)

Czech Republic

**Director:** Daria Kashcheeva

**Produced by:** Zuzana Roháčová

**Awards:** Student Oscar

**Synopsis:** In a hospital room, the Daughter recalls a childhood moment when as a



little girl she tried to share her experience with an injured bird with her Father. A moment of misunderstanding and a lost embrace has stretched into many years all the way to this hospital

room, until the moment when a window pane breaks under the impact of a little bird.

[dariakashcheeva.com](http://dariakashcheeva.com)

## He Can't Live without Cosmos

Russia

**Director:** Konstantin Bronzit

**Produced by:** Melnitsa Animation Studio, Alexander Boyarski, Sergey Selyanov



**Awards:** In the Palace, Krok, Tirana Intl. Film Festival

**Synopsis:** This sequel to the Oscar-nominated 2014 short *We Can't Live without Cosmos* follows the relationship between a mother and her son, and the young boy's obsession with becoming an astronaut and exploring space.

[www.melnitsa.com](http://www.melnitsa.com)

## Hair Love

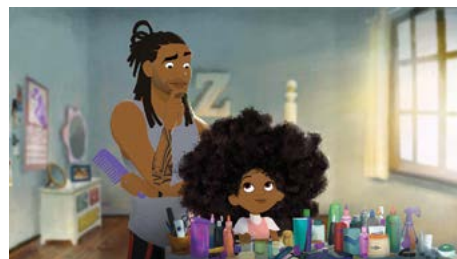
U.S.

**Directors:** Matthew A. Cherry, Everett Downing Jr. and Bruce W. Smith

**Produced by:** Matthew A. Cherry, Stacey Newton, Carl Reed, David Steward II, Karen Tolver, Monica Young

**Synopsis:** An African-American father tries to help his daughter with her hair for the first time.

[matthewacherry.com/hair-love](http://matthewacherry.com/hair-love)



## Hors Piste

France

**Directors:** Léo Brunel, Loris Cavalier, Camille Jalabert, Oscar Malet

**Produced By:** Julien Deparis

**Awards:** New York Children's Int'l Film Festival, BAFTA Student Award, Spark Animation Audience Award

**Synopsis:** Salami and Parmesan, the two best mountain rescue workers in the region, take off for their umpteenth mission. Professionalism and efficiency all around, but things don't really go as planned...

[horspiste-movie.com](http://horspiste-movie.com)





## Kitbull

U.S.

**Director:** Rosana Sullivan

**Produced by:** Kathryn Hendrickson, Pixar SparkShorts



kitten and a pit bull. Together, they experience friendship for the first time.

[pixar.com/sparkshorts](http://pixar.com/sparkshorts)

**Awards:** Nominated for a Humanitas Prize

**Synopsis:** An unlikely connection sparks between a fiercely independent stray

## Mind My Mind

Netherlands

**Director:** Floor Adams

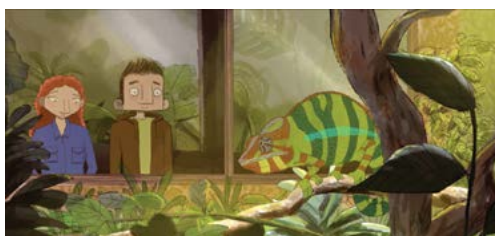
**Produced by:** Floor Adams, Willem Thijssen, Tom van Gestel

**Awards:** Stuttgart Intl. Festival of Animated Film, Indy Shorts, Anima Brussels

**Synopsis:** When relying on social scripts to survive the social

world, it's not easy to go off-script. Especially if you're obsessed with German dive bombers and just want to date a girl.

[mindmymind.nl](http://mindmymind.nl)



## Sister

U.S.

**Director:** Siqi Song

**Produced By:** California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)

**Awards:** Aspen ShortsFest, Austin Film Festival, Foyle Film

Festival, HollyShorts, Anima Brussels, Annie Award nominated

**Synopsis:** A man remembers his childhood growing up with an

annoying little sister in 1990s China. How would his life have been if things had gone differently?

[songsiqi.com/sister](http://songsiqi.com/sister)



## Mémorable

France

**Director:** Bruno Collet

**Produced By:** Jean-François Le Corre, Mathieu Courtois; Vivement Lundi

**Awards:** Annecy Cristal, CoLCoA Los Angeles, Krok, Animatou, Anim'Est, Cinanima

**Synopsis:** Louis, an artist, and his wife, Michelle, have been experiencing strange events for a little while now. The world around them seems to be changing. Slowly, furniture, objects and people become less real. They deconstruct, disintegrate.

[en.unifrance.org/movie/48172/memorable](http://en.unifrance.org/movie/48172/memorable)



## The Physics of Sorrow

Canada

**Director:** Theodore Ushev

**Produced by:** National Film Board of Canada, Marc Betrand

**Awards:** Toronto Intl. Film Festival, Ottawa Intl. Animation Festival, Sommets du Cinéma d'Animation

**Synopsis:** Poetic animation tracks an unknown man's life as he sifts through memories of his youth in Bulgaria through to his increasingly rootless and melancholic adulthood in Canada.

[nfb.ca/film/physics-of-sorrow/](http://nfb.ca/film/physics-of-sorrow/)



## Uncle Thomas: Accounting for the Days (Tío Tomás)

Canada, France, Portugal

**Director:** Regina Pessoa

**Produced By:** NFB, Les Armateurs, Ciclope Films

**Awards:** Annecy Jury Award, Chicago Intl. Children's Film Festival, Annie Award nominated

**Synopsis:** Based on Pessoa's childhood memories, this film pays tribute to her Uncle Thomas — a humble, slightly eccentric man, who led a simple and anonymous life. A testament to the fact that it's not necessary for someone's life to be extraordinary for them to be someone exceptional.

[nfb.ca/film/uncle-thomas-accounting-for-the-days](http://nfb.ca/film/uncle-thomas-accounting-for-the-days) ♦

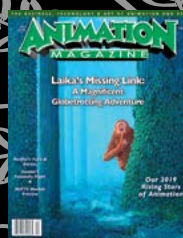




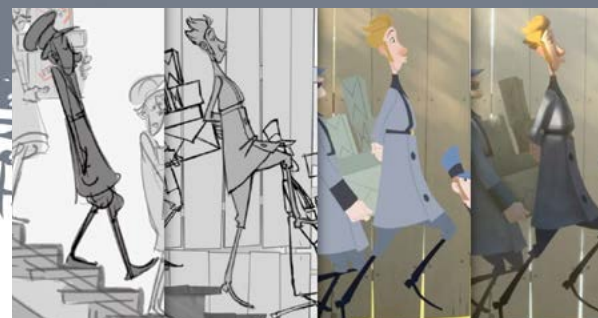
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**“**You were amazing partners to have in our corner, and an essential part of how we achieved the high quality standards we were striving for on Klaus.”

– **Sergio Pablos**, Founder of The SPA Studios, Director of Klaus

**NETFLIX**

THE  
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SERGIO PABLOS ANIMATION

### **Sergio Pablos on the creative process behind Netflix's Klaus**

Pablos' latest project (and directorial debut) is Klaus, a Santa Claus origin story told from the perspective of a postal worker who arrives in a troubled village that doesn't use mail.

Read full interview: [blog.toonboom.com/sergio-pablos-klaus](https://blog.toonboom.com/sergio-pablos-klaus)



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# Toon Boom's Animation From Every Angle Celebrates Diversity

When children's book author Daniel Errico was shopping his 2014 children's book *The Bravest Knight Who Ever Lived* around to studios and broadcasters in the hopes of having it turned into an animation series, many would tell him that they supported his cause but could not produce his content. The reason? Errico's story was centered on a gay couple — a form of love traditionally met with fear and resistance by the kids' media industry.

How things have changed in under five years — gay marriages have been shown on animated children's series from *Arthur* to *Steven Universe*. Streaming services, traditional broadcasters, indie producers and students alike are tapping into a growing global hunger for untold stories. Errico's *The Bravest Knight* also found its happy ending on Hulu and is one of the first projects highlighted on *Animation From Every Angle*, a forward-facing project focused on creators who widen the scope of animation.

Launched by Montreal-based software leader Toon Boom, *Animation from Every Angle* is an online magazine going in-depth on productions that boldly reach new audiences, broaden horizons and use storytelling to shine a light on underrepresented experiences through long-form, journalistic profiles. Whether it be gender, sexual orientation, or racial or cultural identities, diversity and inclusivity have become central themes in the industry behind the scenes and on screens.

## Why representation in animation matters

According to one Univision study, 80 percent of television and film audiences want a more diverse media and entertainment industry. *Animation From Every Angle* aims to empower those changing animation for the better, or are using animation to create change.

"The animation industry is evolving every day and taking an inclusive, progressive stance to help productions get noticed. We



want to support those creators and artists who are reshaping the narrative to make a positive difference, and help them to amplify their reach and impact by connecting them to our global network — and beyond," says Stephanie Quinn, Marketing Director at Toon Boom.

Having celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019, Toon Boom has spent a quarter-century empowering creators with the tools and technology they need to tell their stories. Often serving more as a production partner than a software provider, *Animation From Every Angle* is a continuation of this legacy of promoting content that matters.



"This is our way of giving progressive storytellers walking the walk a platform to also talk the talk, and connecting them to Toon Boom's global community," says Philip Mak, Senior Content Writer at Toon Boom.

He continues, "We curated a list of diverse disruptors whose work spans student projects to streaming platforms for our first edition, because it's not the size of the production but the strength of the story that matters most."

Plus, audiences are demanding — and rewarding— diversity and inclusivity, with the proof being in both the productions and producers: Jennifer Lee's promotion to chief creative

officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios, the success of LGBTQ-related series like *Big Mouth* and *Steven Universe*, as well as *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* winning the 2019 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, among many others.

## The stories behind the storytellers

The inaugural issue of *Animation From Every Angle* features five such stories from around the industry, including interviews with *Hair Love* co-director Matthew A. Cherry, Sony Pictures Animation producer Karen Toliver, the women involved with WIA Vancouver's Five in Focus and more.

"Inclusion is important in all mediums but especially in animation because in my opinion it is the most universal medium. Anytime a young child can see people that look like them on-screen, the more it does for their self-confidence and the better they end up feeling about themselves in the long run," says

Matthew A. Cherry, co-director of *Hair Love*.

He continues, "We've already seen it a little with the both the *Hair Love* short film and book, and it's something that I want to continue doing as I move forward in the business with my future animated projects."

Those interested in being considered for the second edition of *Animation From Every Angle* can submit their projects to [content@toonboom.com](mailto:content@toonboom.com). For more information or to read the full stories, please visit: [AnimationFromEveryAngle.com](http://AnimationFromEveryAngle.com).



# Hair Love

Untangling diversity in animation  
with *Hair Love*'s Matthew A. Cherry

FEATURE ARTICLE in Animation from Every Angle

[animationfromeveryangle.com](http://animationfromeveryangle.com)

## ANIMATION FROM EVERY ANGLE

Animation From Every Angle is a forward-facing project from Toon Boom, with the goal of interviewing creators who widen the scope of animation, boldly reach new audiences, broaden horizons and use storytelling to shine a light on underrepresented experiences.

“I think the main reason [*Hair Love*] has resonated so much with the public and media is because we all can relate to having someone we love ask us to do something we don't know how to do. The mere act of you trying to figure that out is a way for you to show them how much you love them.”

– Matthew A. Cherry, Writer, Director & Producer *Hair Love*



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A great deal of what we do in our beloved animation industry is for children. They have given so much to us through their enjoyment of our movies and shows that we want to give back to them. DeZerlin Entertainment is donating this ad space to inspire us all to help the children any way we can. Please visit the websites of these seminal children's charities, and give generously to one or more.

*– Lin Zhang, Founder and CEO, DeZerlin Entertainment*



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Make-A-Wish.

A nonprofit organization founded in the United States that creates life-changing wishes for children with a critical illness.



## It's a Hoot!

Disney Channel's hot new animated series *The Owl House* offers the perfect combination of comedy, whimsy and weird magic.

By Ramin Zahed

**Y**ou would never think that the dark art of 15<sup>th</sup> century Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch would ever serve as the inspiration for a Disney children's cartoon. Well, thanks to Dana Terrace and her wild imagination, the strange creatures conjured by the European painter have found their way in the new Disney Channel series *The Owl House*. The show, which debuts this month, and is already in production of its second season, follows the adventures of a young teenage girl named Luz who decides to pursue her dreams of becoming a witch after she stumbles into a strange realm, inhabited by feisty witch Eda and her tiny warrior friend King.

Terrace, a former director on *DuckTales* and storyboard artist on *Gravity Falls*, recalls starting to collect her notes and images and putting together her pitch for the story back in 2015. Then, she finally began pitching her story about a young girl who becomes a witch's apprentice only a few months after she started directing *DuckTales*. "Many of the characters have barely changed since then," recalls Terrace. "I knew I wanted an older witch mentor figure and a young optimistic girl who was the main character,

who learns and grows throughout the show. There's also this trickster little jerk character named King (voiced by *Gravity Falls* creator Alex Hirsch).

The setting for *The Owl House* changed a little bit since its early days. Terrace says for a brief time, she was toying with the idea of the whole show being set after the young character dies, so that the Owl House is all set in the afterlife. What really had a clear impact on her work is the work of artists such as Bosch, John Bauer, Remedios Varos and the puppetry of Jim Henson.

### Real-Life Models

In addition to the crazy creatures of Bosch and religious illuminated manuscripts, Terrace found inspiration in some of the familiar elements in her life as well. "I have always wanted to tell a story about a rough-





**Witch's****Apprentice:**

Dana Terrace based Luz, the main character of her new show *The Owl House*, on her good friend and former roommate.



around-the-edges mother figure, based off of my aunt, nana and mother who raised me," she recalls.

Terrace says the show's central character Luz evolved from late-night conversations she used to have with her former roommate roommate and close college friend. "We were both dorks together," she recalls. "We tried to cut our own hair and it never worked out. We didn't have many friends. So, in a way, Luz bubbled out of our conversations. When I told her that I was going to base the main character on her, she said, 'Yes, but you'll have to make her Dominican.' So that's what happened. Luz now also works on the show as a storyboard artist and consultant, and I get to work with my best friend every day."

As a young girl, Terrace used to sneak into the living room to watch cartoons and copy what she liked in her flip books. Her love for shows such as *The Simpsons*, *Pokemon*, *The PowerPuff Girls* and Studio Ghibli movies finally lead her to study animation at School of Visual Arts in New York and make her way out to L.A. to pursue a career in the animation business. Her first big break happened when someone discovered her art blog and sent her a storyboarding test, which led to her landing a job at *Gravity Falls* and opened other doors as well.

During her big pitch to Disney, Terrace says she was a bit worried to mention Bosch and his odd, evil creatures, but to her surprise, one

of the executive's response was, "Heck, yeah!" "They have been nothing more than enthusiastic and helpful from day one," she notes.

After spending a good year writing and making the pilot, Terrace began building her production team in 2018. Art director Ricky Cometa and supervising producer Stephen Sandoval also joined the Disney TV Animation production. At capacity, the show has about 50 staffers as part of its pre-production crew, and an overall count of 120 including the overseas teams at Sunwoo, Rough Draft and Sugarcube in Korea. We've been very fortunate to work with all of them," says Terrace. "They've made the show really, really spark."

*The Owl House* has attracted a top-notch list of vocal talent as well, including Wendie Malick as Eda, Hirsch as King and Sarah-Nicole Robles as Luz. Among the guest star lineup for the show's first season are Matthew Rhys, Isabella Rossellini, Tati Gabrielle, Issac Ryan Brown, Mae Whitman, Bumper Robinson and Parvesh Cheena. Terrace points out that having a sterling class led by Malick has been a real treat. "Our witch could have been a very hard character to cast, because we wanted to have sass and energy, and Wendy was absolutely perfect. She came in with all her talent and experience, and my first instinct was 'You don't need any direction. Do whatever you want to do because you are amazing!'"

She also mentions that she knew Alex Hirsch was going to end up playing the little sidekick



King. "I used to hear him pitch when I worked on *Gravity Falls*. I knew that he can bring a lot to the characters he plays. He would also give me some helpful advice about running his own show and working at Disney."

Art director Ricky Cometa (*Steven Universe*, *Costume Quest*) says he was swept away by Terrace's wild ideas and spectacular imagery, things that were not usually seen in children's animation. "The second she came in and said, 'I want you to read this show bible. The first thing that caught my eye was 'Bosch and the demon world?' I very much needed help to figure out what this world looks like. We had this blank canvas and there was a lot of religious iconography. I knew we were going to push the boundaries. I mean we are doing the demon realm on the Disney Channel? You bet I'm in!"





Cometa points out that it was clear that they needed to balance the darker aspects of the witch's world with the more light-hearted and fun components of Luz's comical adventures. "At first, I wasn't sure how dark we could have made the world this world that Luz jumps into initially. We had to make clear decisions about when the story needed to be scary—when do we highlight the darker moments versus when the story is lighthearted and welcoming. It was all about finding that right balance of warmth and spookiness."

Terrace agrees. "If we made everything super scary and spooky, which is something I'm not afraid of scaring my audience, but if we made everything the same color, then the scary parts and the day-to-day light-hearted parts wouldn't have popped. We needed that contrast for writing purposes."

Amazingly enough, Terrace is only the fourth woman to solely create and run an animated series for Disney—following in the footsteps of Sue Rose (*Pepper Ann*), Chris Nee (*Doc McStuffins*) and Daron Nefcy (*Star vs. the Forces of Tomorrow*). She says one of her biggest challenges on the show was going through the learning process to run a writer's room, which includes four other writers and a writer's assistant. "Before this show I had always written and drawn my own comics and cartoons, but this was the first time I had written scripts professionally. Learning the process of writing scripts and learning to run a writers' room was probably the biggest challenge for me. Luckily,



**Odd Creatures:** Eda the Witch (voiced by Wendie Malick) and her tiny warrior King (Alex Hirsch) allow Luz to learn everything she can about this new magical realm.

I was with a team of talented writers, and we all kind of learned together. Most of that team has carried on to the second season, and we're very excited to keep writing together.

As the show begins its run on Disney Channel, Terrace says that ultimately she hopes audiences will be entertained by Luz's world and her off-the-wall adventures. "There are so many different kinds of animated shows out there and so many traditional and streaming services, that I don't think it's possible to have a gigantic blowout hit anymore. At the end of

the day, no matter how much stuff is out there, stories with interesting core characters and relatable, understandable stories will shine through." ♦

**The Owl House premieres on Disney Channel and DisneyNOW on Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:45 p.m. DisneyNOW app will also launch an adventure game set in the world of *The Owl House*. New shorts featuring Luz, Eda and King will debut in the spring on Disney Channel and Disney Channel YouTube.**





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# To Live and Ride in L.A.

DreamWorks Animation gives the *Fast and Furious* franchise a family-friendly series treatment, but keeps the cool cars and the cool visuals.

By Karen Idelson

Almost two decades have passed since the first *The Fast and the Furious* movie set the standard for gorgeous high-performance race cars, mind-bending visual effects and the kind of awe-inspiring cinematography that plants you right in the middle of those impossibly fun chase sequences. With all of that in mind, the showrunners of the new animated series *Fast & Furious: Spy Racers* set out to make a show that would honor the action films that preceded it.

They also wanted the show to be grounded in the characters that audiences already know. Vin Diesel, who has played Dom Torretto from the first live action film, is a producer on the series. He also has a cameo as

Dom in the first episode of the series.

"We knew we wanted to tie into the Torretto family because the franchise is all about fam-

ner for the new DreamWorks/Netflix show. "So we have this character Tony Torretto, who is Dom's cousin. And then we built his crew

around him and who would be the people that you'd see on the streets of Los Angeles, and L.A. seemed like the natural place to start. It gives our characters a very cool, visually identifiable home base. You can go very gritty in L.A. and you can also go super glitzy and Hollywood and it gives us multiple worlds to explore."

The high-octane world of the *Fast & Furious* films is certainly adult in many respects (violence and adult themes and language), so the producers decided to make more family friendly choices



"You can go very gritty in L.A., and you can also go super glitzy and Hollywood and it gives us multiple worlds to explore."

— Show runner Tim Hedrick



ily and all about Dom Torretto, who is played by Vin Diesel," says Tim Hedrick, the show run-



when adapting the world for a younger audience. While there is conflict, the characters aren't using guns, and they're certainly not dropping any f-bombs.

Hedrick, who has worked on several acclaimed family shows, including *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Legend of Korra* and *Voltron: Legendary Defender*, believes the new series still captures the feeling of the films while keeping an eye on tone and subject. "We have great relationships between the main characters and the cars and chase sequences still hold up to the films," says Hedrick. "You'll still see amazing cars and cinematography and chases."

### All the Right Voices

He is also quick to point to voice talent as a special part of the show. "Tyler Posey (the voice of Tony Toretto) is the most famous of our people and it's all about finding the core of our characters," says Hedrick. "When Tyler comes in he's very much a guy who wears his heart on his sleeve and feels right as Tony Toretto. He feels like the leader of a crew but also an innocent. A lot of these big action franchises begin with someone who seems like they already know how to do everything. They can fight and drive and shoot and do all this stuff. To

me, it was way more interesting to start with someone from zero and build from there. This is more of a coming of age tale, how a young character becomes that person who knows how to do everything. DreamWorks Animation brought in wonderful people for us to audition."

While there are no immediate plans to have other actors besides Diesel from the live action films take a guest role on the series, Hedrick and fellow showrunner Bret Haaland aren't ruling it out. With the story connections set, the producers also decided to lean into the look of the original live action movies.

"We worked so hard to get these race sequences where they needed to be," says Haaland.

"And we also worked on the design of the characters and the cars coming out of a reality-based philosophy. We started with what you'd see in live action and then we enhanced the colors and we pushed the acting of the characters so it seems more like animation but it's also based in something real. That's the line we're trying to walk. And the

powerful, gritty style of the show.

"We wanted features quality car chases and stunts on a animation TV budget," says Haaland. "We spent a lot of time studying the *Fast & Furious* movies and we noticed there's a high shot count. So we did get a lot more shots for our action sequences so that they cut a lot more. We studied the cinematography

and the low angle shots in live action movies where they use what's called an "ultimate arm" so they can do all these incredible tracking shots and all the races. We've approximated what they do in the world of CG so we're constantly blending quick camera shots with these moving, low-angle shots. Then we cut inside the cars to the characters to get their reactions all the time. We originally thought we'd do this show in an anime-style but then we looked at films like *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* and just thought we liked the look and the feeling of full animation."

Browne used particular tones and shades in the animation to bring across the specifics in the storytelling. It was all the service of the sto-



**Hot Wheels:** Dominic Toretto's cousin Tony (voiced by Tyler Posey) is recruited by a government agency with his friends to infiltrate an elite racing league serving as a front for a criminal organization in the new DreamWorks series.



"We wanted to push that saturation in the colors and an extreme variety in the colors; we wanted to use the cinematography of the show to move the story along."

— CG supervisor Chris Browne



cars reflect the characters so Tony (Toretto) drives a muscle car. This extended through every aspect of production so you have the sound effects department finding the proper sounds for the different tires on a muscle car or a truck and also making sure they have the right sounds for a muscle car engine."

### Saturated Colors

Haaland, Hedrick and CG supervisor Chris Browne made a point of looking at live action films, animated features and took into account how certain shots came together and how they'd fit into what they wanted to do with this series. They even considered different styles of animation before arriving at the

ries they set out to tell.

"We wanted to push that saturation in the colors and an extreme variety in the colors; we wanted to use the cinematography of the show to move the story along," says CG supervisor Chris Browne. "In some sequences at night we'd even use a film-noir style of lighting and maybe have some light coming through some blinds. We wanted the viewers to come along on the ride with us and for the cinematography, composition and color to give them a sense of where the story is taking place and help them follow the story and the characters. ♦

**The first season of *Fast & Furious: Spy Racers* is currently streaming on Netflix.**



# Little Wheels Keep Turning

The great-looking new Netflix preschool show *Go! Go! Cory Carson* promises to entertain and educate the younger set!

By Karen Idelson

Cars have always been popular with kids as toys or in animation. Whether they're traveling on an adventure or part of a wild imagined stunt, few things capture the imagination faster than these wheeled machines.

So, it's no wonder that Pixar alums Alex Woo and Stanley Moore saw the potential in creating a preschool animated kids series based on the Go! Go! Smart Wheels toys from VTech Electronics. And they even found something they could add to the canon of car programs with the new series *Go! Go! Cory Carson*.

"While there are lots of shows that focus on vehicles, especially for kids, there's nothing that we found that was about the entire family, or about what it meant to be a kid," says Moore, who along with Woo and Tim Hahn founded the Berkeley-based Kuku Studios in 2016. "And we

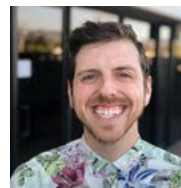
got really excited about creating a world that focused on a family experience where we have vehicles. When we started working on this project we would listen to stories from our own childhoods. There's also very diverse parenting right now, lots of different ideas about

what it means to be a parent, and something that we tried to do with the show is create worlds and stories that both parents and kids could relate to so they could find something in the show that makes it fun to watch."

According to the producers, the show offers a parent perspective so that the parents who are watching have something to relate to and to connect to, while at the same time there's something that the child finds in the show. "The kids will see the experience of what it means to go to school for the first time, for example," says Moore. "And there's also the parent perspective of what it means to drop off your child at school for the first time."

"While there are lots of shows that focus on vehicles, especially for kids, there's nothing that we found that was about the entire family, or about what it meant to be a kid."

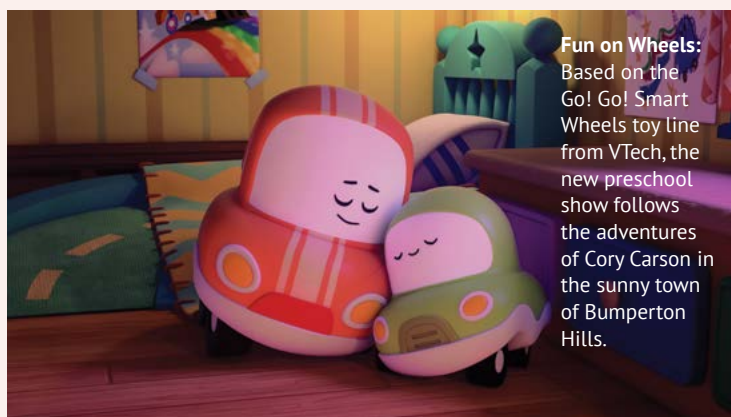
— Exec producer Stanley Moore



## A Global Effort

The show has a global team with the main animation production done





**Fun on Wheels:** Based on the Go! Go! Smart Wheels toy line from VTech, the new preschool show follows the adventures of Cory Carson in the sunny town of Bumperton Hills.



in France by Paris-based Superprod (*Pat the Dog*, *White Fang*). Tonko House (*Dam Keeper*), which does production design for the series, has offices in Berkeley, California and Japan. The animation is created using Maya and over 200 people work on this show worldwide.

Moore and Woo wanted the show to focus on things a preschool audience would find relatable and engaging. The line of Go! Go! Smart Wheels cars have the kind of smooth finish without hard edges and bright colors that are beloved by the preschool set. So, their take on the cars in the show was created with that in mind.

Each episode is around seven minutes long, give or take ten to twenty seconds, and focuses on a storyline designed to captivate their younger viewers.

"It was really important to us to have a feeling of authenticity in the storytelling and the characters and the cars when we set out to make the show," says Woo. "We didn't want to make a high-tech action adventure high speed racing show about cars or something that didn't feel right in terms of childhood of preschool

kids. I have my own test audience. When I watched the show recently, I sat down to watch it with my son. When I see that he's laughing at the characters and relating to them and calling them by name, I feel like it's working. We really wanted the show to be about characters the come together to form relationships, because then everyone who watches it, kids or adults, will find something in it, which is something that was definitely part of storytelling at Pixar. Kids who watch the show are going to be fac-



ing some of the things our characters face so they'll see how Cory and his family deal with the same things on the show."

The team behind the series also wanted to reference the toys that inspired the show. They had a certain look that translated to animation easily but they also needed to take it a step further to give the show a look of its own.

### Perfect Shading and Texture

"I recently sat down to watch the show with my son. When I see that he's laughing at the characters and relating to them and calling them by name, I feel like it's working."

— Exec producer Alex Woo



"We tried to really keep the spirit of much of the original design of the toys, especially with the characters," says Moore. "I mean, there's an adorable chunkiness to the original toys and we really got into that design, that feeling of the toys. And as far as like the world goes, I drew a lot of inspiration from when I was a kid I had a lot of action figures. We wanted it to feel like a kid playing with their own toys and making up these stories for the toys. We wanted the show to feel like this story you've imag-

ined as a kid with your own toys has come to life. We worked Tonko House, which does amazing work and they did great production design to the show. They brought this sort of found materials approach to the shading and the texture, which gives the characters a kind of rubbery feeling to them, like you could pick them up and touch them."

Woo and Moore

also drew from their experiences at Pixar when crafting the show. The two learned to work on story and visuals in tandem.

"Story was drilled into all the big decisions at Pixar," says Moore. "It's the driving force of all your decisions, both creatively and with process and workflow. The production of this show was built around a storyboard driven process. There are basically two ways in ani-

mation. Either you have a script all figured out on the written page or you can have a storyboard process, where you're essentially figuring out the story and the script. While you're drawing these storyboards, which are your comic strip of the movie, you're writing the story in concert with creating the visual storytelling. And this

let us discover so many moments that you would never discover otherwise."

He concludes, "We found comedy and heartfelt moments that all came out of this process. Working this way, in this very visual medium, allows us to take full advantage of it. We were really excited to bring this process into the preschool space for this show." ♦

**Go! Go Cory Carson premieres on Netflix on January 4.**



# A Horse, Of Course!

Ant Blades talks about his charming and hilarious new Nickelodeon show *It's Pony*.

Who doesn't want a fun, impulsive and always adventurous pony in their life? Annie (voiced by Jessica DiCicco), the bright-eyed girl in the center of Nickelodeon's new animated series *It's Pony*, certainly knows that her life is so much better with her best friend, Pony (Josh Zuckerman) – but it also makes it more complicated because they live in a city! The new show also features the voices of Abe Benrubi, India de Beaufort, Kal Penn, Bobby Moynihan, Rosario Dawson, Mark Feuerstein and Megan Hilty.

*It's Pony* was created by animation veteran Ant Blades of London-based Birdbox Studio. "I was trying to think of a good idea for a series and wanted it to be relatable and simple," he tells us. "I was looking for an idea that had scope for a lot of craziness but also room for

heart and charm. A girl trying to look after her pony in the city sprang to mind. Especially if it wasn't that easy. How would you cope with a horse in an elevator?"

step to where it is now.

The 2D animated series is produced in London at Blue Zoo studio, home of *Paddington*, *Numberblocks* and *Digby Dragon*. A team of

about 70 people work on the series, and the animators use Toon Boom Harmony to produce it. "The aim was to create a visually unique style to try and make it feel more hand drawn, to steer away from some more common styles and push towards something that felt more tactile and rough," notes Blades. "Pony himself benefits from line work that's more untidy and energetic."



**Horsing Around:** *It's Pony* follows the adventures of a young country girl who moves to the big city with her best friend, Pony.

Blades came up with the first sketches for the pilot back in 2013 for Nickelodeon International Animated Shorts call out. "That seems like a long time ago now," he notes. "It hasn't been solid since then, though. Step by

## It's Complicated!

The creator says he loves Pony, but he thinks the show is the most relatable when we, as viewers, are put into Annie's shoes.





"Pony's a horse... of course, it's not easy. I love them most, not when they're acting like 'best buds forever', but when she's pushing his nose out of her cereal."

Before diving into the world of Annie and Pony, Blades had been directing ads, idents and shorts at Bird-box for the past nine years. "The work was varied and allowed me to jump from project to project, which keeps things interesting for me," he says. "I've always enjoyed making shorts and, if possible, making people laugh. One of the biggest challenges for me is transform-

ing from a short-form guy into a longer-form guy, and adapting to the schedules and teams that come along with that."

Blades actually started off studying civil engineering because he didn't realize that animation could be a career. "I'd always

loved comic strips and cartoons, but thought I should get a 'proper' job. While studying

"I watched a lot of TV cartoons, but what really inspired me was the world of comic strips. Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* was huge for me. I remember reading a friend's collection and being totally lost in the world."

— Creator Ant Blades

*Hobbes* was huge for me. I remember reading a friend's collection and being totally lost in the world. And it's such a lovely world."



He says he also watched every animated movie he could find. "The first one that really got me was Pixar's *Monsters, Inc.*, which is still my favorite, and has a huge heart just like *Calvin and Hobbes*. So maybe that's what gets me."

Now that he has seen his clever idea come to animated life after so many years of work and development, we had to ask him to dispense some valuable advice, right? And of course, he obliges. "There are so many platforms out there to be noticed now," says Blades. "If you love making things move, then try and regularly put stuff out there. Offering advice is hard! Work hard? Try and keep the passion? Step

away at times, so you remember what you love about animation in the first place!" ♦

**It's *Pony* premieres on Nickelodeon in the U.S. on Saturday, January 18. The show will bow internationally in April.**



though, I managed to get a cartoon strip in a national paper and that gave the confidence that I should try cartooning and animation professionally. I watched a lot of TV cartoons, but what really inspired me was the world of comic strips. Bill Watterson's *Calvin and*

# A Force for Change

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy discusses the making and impact of her animated short *Sitara: Let Girls Dream*.

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's animated short *Sitara: Let Girls Dream* tackles one of the most important issues facing young girls in many countries around the world: how many are forced to abandon their personal dreams and marry older men through arrangements by their families. The beautifully animated CG short tells the story of 14-year-old Sitara, who dreams of becoming a pilot, but her goals are restricted by a middle eastern society that forces young girls to have arranged marriages.

"*Let Girls Dream* is an animated short film that was initially dreamt up many years ago," says the multiple Emmy- and Oscar-winning Obaid-Chinoy in a recent interview. "When my team and I began researching and carried out a series of interviews with young girls around the world who had been forced into early marriage, what we most commonly encountered was that the girls spoke a lot about their dreams. They regretted the fact that they had to give up school, were no longer able to be with their friends, and unable to study and become doctors, lawyers or artists."

After going through those recordings, Obaid-Chinoy felt there needed to be a film made about the dreams of young girls that becomes a conversation-starter between parents and children – something that could be shown on various platforms around the world. "When I began to write about the short's protagonist Pari I always imagined her to be free and to be flying," she says.

## Labor of Love and Equality

The short was produced at Waadi Animations, Obaid-Chinoy's own animation production company in Pakistan. About 40 people worked for 15 months to complete the production, using a variety of open software and proprietary software developed at the studio.

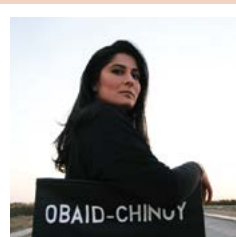
"Animation allows you to convey things that I feel live-action and documentary films cannot," she notes. "Animation is also not considered a threatening medium – parents watch it, children watch it. You give life to characters that shine on screen, they sing, you use music – it's possible to reach two different audiences (parents and children), and I think that child marriage is such a sensitive issue in so many countries, including mine, that creating a film that spoke about that issue seen through the lens of the dreams of a young girl was hugely important."

The filmmaker and her team have been able to show the films at schools all around the



'I want Waadi Animations to be a company where women feel safe, where they can come and create animation which allows them the ability to hone their skills, express themselves and display their own creativity.'

— Writer-director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy



world in the past five months. "In almost every school we have been to, there have been thoughtful discussions – sometimes with parents or with just the students – and in some of the communities that we have been screening the film, child marriage is in practice," says the director. "Animation allowed us to get our foot in the door so that we could at least have that conversation."

Obaid-Chinoy, who won two Oscars for her hard-hitting documentaries *Saving Face* and *A*



*Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*, which examined contemporary issues faced by women in Pakistan, says her Karachi-based studio was set up so that she could create local heroes. "I wanted to present local characters for the children of Pakistan – because most of them had never seen a reflection of themselves on the big screen before. They could hear the language, they could see their clothes, they could see their streets come to life! While we were quite used to watching animation from Hollywood here, I thought our children also deserved to see more representations of themselves and that's what motivated us to create animation."

She says after *Sitara: Let Girls Dream* finally made it into the world, she and her team began to see the reactions that children, parents and audiences had and that gave them a lot of self confidence in their abilities to create animation, and to experience what it felt like to be part of the global animation fraternity. "My team that has worked on the film have

one simple hope: that girls around the world will be inspired to achieve their dreams," says the director. "If *Sitara* can play a small role in doing that (which we are already seeing happen during and after screenings), it gives us all tremendous joy and hope for the future."

**Produced by Netflix and Waadi Animations, *Sitara: Let Girls Dream* is written and directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy. For more info, visit [www.letgirlsdream.org](http://www.letgirlsdream.org).**





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# All Creatures Great and Monstrous

The new Netflix series *The Witcher* offers a wide variety of digital demons and jaw-droppingly stunning battle sequences.

By Trevor Hogg

If you were guessing that a much-anticipated series based on a supernatural breed of monster hunters would have spectacular visual effects, you would be absolutely right. The new Netflix series *The Witcher*, which is based on Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski's popular novels, stars Henry Cavill as Geralt the Witcher, Anya Chalotra as a sorceress named Yennefer and Freya Allan as the mysterious mutant Ciri.

Showrunner Lauren Hissrich (*The Umbrella Academy*) made a conscious decision to draw inspiration from the source material rather than the internationally renowned video game version of the fantasy drama. Given the nature of the story, which takes place in a vast and varied medieval land inhabited by sorcerers, elves and fantastical creatures, production VFX supervisor Julian Parry (*Vikings*) had to deliver a wide array of digital augmentation for each of Season One's eight episodes.

"When I read the script, what came to mind was how similar it was to the scale of something like *The Lord of the Rings*," notes Parry. "You're dealing with the same aspirations and

high expectations of what people are currently seeing on television and in the movies. Part of my job is to try to make sure that we're doing visual effects that can be managed, service the script, and are achievable within a television schedule."

The first season features just under 2,000 visual effects shots created over a period of six months by Cinesite, Framestore, One of Us, NVIZ and Platige Image. "We had to be aware of the episodic deadlines, needed to implement designs as early as possible, and got the vendors working on the shots as soon as we could."

## Creatures with Many Legs

First order of business was to conduct a limited amount of research. "I didn't want to be contaminated by any outside influence, but instead decided to stay focused on how Lauren interpreted the books," remarks Parry. "I drew upon my rich background in dealing with creatures as well as European and Slavic folklore, in which *The Witcher* is set." Outside of a couple of early designs produced by the



art department, the visual effects department looked after the creation of the creatures. "Sometimes the creature design is all well and good until you want to make it work, let alone fight."

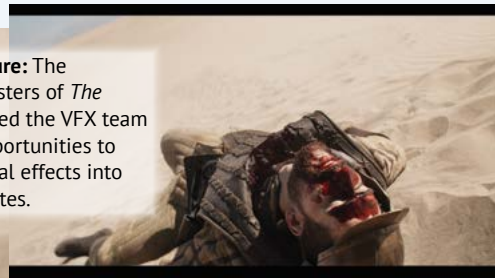
A mixture of practical and digital effects was utilized to bring the creatures to life and have them interact with the cast members Cavill, Allan and Chalotra. "Occasionally, we went pure CGI and had a proxy device for the actors."

In the opening sequence of the first episode, Geralt of Rivia is in a swamp battling a massive arachnoid known as the Kikimora. "A lot of our creatures have numerous legs!" laughs Parry. "In the case of the Kikimora, director Alik Sakharov (*Game of Thrones*) wanted





**Creature Feature:** The insectoid monsters of *The Witcher* provided the VFX team with many opportunities to integrate digital effects into live-action plates.



it to be like a fighting machine. It's tricky to keep the creature balanced and attacking at the same time. We knew from the script what type of creature it needed to be, did some quick motion studies and shoehorned those all into place to come up with the final animation."

"Henry is not on a greenscreen stage," says Parry. "So, it's about making sure that the actor is engaged. On *The Witcher*, there are a handful of greenscreen shots. The rest of it is in a real set or environment."

Outside of the Kikimora, all of the other creatures were integrated into live-action plates shot on location. "Creatures will be seen in forests or caves or running across the desert," he notes. "Each creature brings their own set of challenges. We had many Ghouls to deal with. They come from underground, like moles. We had to work out the animation of

how the Ghouls were going to appear out of the ground, run around and move. This was in episode eight, we were running out of time, so needed to be efficient in the way it was going to be shot and be post-produced. We went for a halfway point between motion capture and prosthetics. The stunt team arranged for small performers to perform the role of the Ghouls to interact with Henry, and then we pulled the production plate apart and applied our Ghoul over the top."

The series also features a fascinating new breed of insect. "When that came up in the script, I asked, 'What's a *Roachhound*? Are we doing a mangy dog?' Lauren said, 'No. We want it to be half cockroach and half dog.' The company One of Us took on that particular project.

That was straightforward, because we wanted to have a cockroach move with the nuances of a hound."

### Building a Magical Realm

As expected, magic is interwoven into the narrative. "Lauren has built a clever arc for the magic," observes Parry. "The power of Yennefer is hinted to in a couple of scenes. It is alluded that she might have the capability to hold energy. She stumbles across her power early on, but not in a destructive way. She learns how to portal. The character arc grows stronger as the episodes continue on and has a catastrophic end use for that special energy and power that she has."

"I drew upon my rich background in dealing with creatures as well as European and Slavic folklore, in which *The Witcher* is set. Sometimes the creature design is all well and good until you want to make it work, let alone fight."

— VFX supervisor Julian Parry

A major plotline involves Ciri learning that she not just of royal blood but has magical abilities that make her an extremely powerful weapon. "Ciri has a similar arc," explains Parry. "She is not aware of her powers, which are alluded to, and in the end also has a chaotic moment. This is what will ultimately bring Geralt of Rivia, Yennefer and Ciri together. The magic was dealt with in a sophisticated and chic way. Lauren wanted the magic to speak to the drama. For example, Mousesack [Adam Levy] is not a flash-bang-wallop kind of guy; his magic is grounded in nature."

Another VFX highlight involves a desert sequence, where Yennefer conjures a sand portal. "Any environment that she went into the portal would affect one of the main elements

that was within that place," explains the Parry. "When I read that in the script, I thought, 'This could be one of our Achilles' heels.' What is a portal? It's not a fixed thing. Everyone has their own idea. We had a good four months of researching the looks of our various portals. Different characters within the show have their signature portal. We didn't want to do the water ripple effect or even a ring, which reminded us too much of *Stargate*."

Another one of the show's memorable images is that of a cosmic tree. "This is one of Ciri's future visions and was a digital matte painting that was taken on by Platige Image in Poland. It was a production shot plate from the Canary Islands in the sand dunes. The only thing that is CGI is the tree itself."

Meanwhile, it was the team at Cinesite that looked after the epic battles taking place between warring kingdoms. "You have to be smart how you design the shot. The foreground is kept as real as possible and rely on the background becoming a simulation," says Parry.

"There weren't as many set extensions as you might think," he adds. "I was a big advocate for building and getting in the real environment as much as possible. But the location work was not easy. We were shooting in Budapest in the mid-winter. It got down to minus 12 or maybe even lower. That was



challenging for the crew."

The scripts also proved to be quite ambitious. "I knew that it was going to be challenging from the onset because the expectation on the page was very evident," says Parry. "Almost every minute of this series is a visual treat, and that involves visual effects. I hope that viewers like the creatures. And some of the gore is unusual and unique for a TV series. The trebuchet fire is beautiful. I just want people to enjoy *The Witcher* the way that I've enjoyed making the show." ♦

**The first season of *The Witcher* is now streaming on Netflix globally.**

# Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



## Foundry's Katana 3.2

I'm not sure how long it has been since I first reviewed Katana. I suspect it was in its formative years, when Foundry acquired it from Sony Pictures Imageworks and brought it into the fold as a lighting and look development tool for everyone to use. The product has made its way into many of the leading visual effects houses. It loads scenes quite quickly, using a deferred loading system with support for alembic and USD. The workflow is flexible and, more importantly, shareable, which means that multiple artists can work within sequences, share assets and shaders, and remain consistent — even when assets are changing. It's also render agnostic — so regardless of your render poison (Renderman, 3Delight,

Arnold, V-Ray), you aren't going to have to redo your pipeline.

Version 3.2 has a laundry list of additions and upgrades of which the most substantial is an overhaul to the material creation workflow and UX. In earlier

versions, there was a lot of power, but not so much finesse. Katana is inheriting much of the new experience from years of feedback from artists using Nuke and a healthy helping from Houdini.

The shader networks are designed to be dipped in and out of. Diving into nodes allows for more real estate to work with. In and outputs of the node are the left and right sides of the window. After working within the node, you can bounce back up and out to a more macro view of the network. This is essential, because you have the ability to nest shaders within shaders and create new widgets to share. Houdini users will be absolutely familiar. To further clean things up, you can compress or hide network wires, which tidies up the screen, removing the inevitable spaghetti plate of large, unmanageable node trees. Foundry threw in an auto-layout function to snap your nodes into alignment, a dot function to help keep things organized, and a back-drop to assist in grouping pieces of the network, and making for better readability.

While Katana doesn't care what render engine you are using, the render engine does care how you build the networks, and each renderer has slightly different methodologies. That's why Katana allows you to switch between renders and have multiple context-specific shader nodes that may

use the same textures and upstream nodes, but a renderer-specific output — so you can develop looks for multiple renderers simultaneously.

Katana ships with an interactive license of 3Delight, so you can get started rendering right away. 3Delight NSI is brought up to v1.5 which chats with the viewport, driven by Pixar's Hydra Viewer and its support for USD (Universal Scene Description). Katana 3.2 makes a leap up to version 19.05 of USD which includes the ability to change the GL system that is rendering to the interactive viewport. The 3Delight upgrade also supports a random walk subsurface scattering model, faster hair, better support for volumes and multi-viewport rendering.

*I'm not gonna lie:* Katana isn't the least expensive piece of software out there, especially given that it's a bit niche. But even if you are a small studio, if you get a job with lots of shots with similar CG environments or assets, the investment may be worth it when you weigh it against the number of artists you'll have to hire, and the amount of time they'll have to spend loading scenes, and more time updating them if there are client changes (God forbid).

**Price: \$9,008 (Interactive license); Render node (\$1,000)**

## Foundry's Mari 4.6

Mari is Foundry's 3D texture and look development tool. Like Katana's beginnings at Sony Imageworks, Mari was developed at Weta Digital, and then acquired by Foundry, who took the baton and ran with it, sharing it with the rest of the world. It's exceptionally good at memory management and really responsive. Maybe I'm wrong, but we may be able to blame it (and perhaps Autodesk's Mudbox) for the industry-wide adoption of UDIM tiles. But what's new in Mari 4.6?

Frankly, there is a little catch-up going on with the guys over Allegorithmic, but Mari is hardly at a disadvantage. Let's just call this a friendly little competition. That said, Mari has implemented what it calls Geo-Channels, which are calculations from the geometry of the object being painted. Ambient Occlusion and Curvature, for example, are derived by calculating ray casts, normals and other math-y things to create a map or mask; that, in turn, can be used to drive other textures — like dirt in cracks and crevices, or wear

and tear where the model sticks out. In Substance, these are pre-baked to maps and then imported back in to drive Smart Materials. Mari, on the other hand, has the ability to keep these live based on the input geo, although they *can* be exported to maps through "Bake Points" if you like.

Additional procedural maps such as fractals and noise in various flavors and patterns such as bricks, weaves and scratches have been added. All these textures, whether Geo Channels, procedural, explicitly painted or laid in like decals, are fed into an updated Material System, which parallels Katana in the way that you build shaders. The difference is that the output is meant to act as a light preview of what the shaders will look like once you get them into Katana and rendered in your package of choice. The Texture/Look Dev artists can check the textures and get the shaders to a certain level, and then pass them downstream to Katana where they can be finessed. Using Bake Points, the Mari artist can export out the necessary textures, and the shader can be used as a guideline.

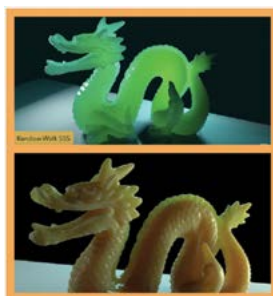
Mari's shader and texture node networks have also been updated in the same way as Katana has. Because the user experience is the same, it's easy for the artists to move back and forth between Mari and Katana. And to help prevent round-trips between the two programs, Mari now has 3Delight and V-Ray support, ensuring that the look in Mari will be substantially closer to the final output; removing a whole layer of guesswork and re-developing once it's in Katana.

While supervising on *For All Mankind* for AppleTV+, the team at Method was using this workflow, painting in Mari and Look Developing/Lighting in Katana, with RenderMan as the output. It made for quick turn-arounds, and consistent results — even when notes were coming in at the very last minute. A team of eight lighters and four texture artists developed a ton of assets and hundreds of stunning visual effects shots.

**Website: [foundry.com/products/mari](http://foundry.com/products/mari)**

**Price: \$2,068 (buy); \$689 (rent per quarter); \$599 (yearly sub); \$59 (monthly sub)**

Todd Sheridan Perry is a VFX supervisor and digital artist who has worked on many acclaimed features such as *Black Panther*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Speed Racer* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. You can reach him at [todd@teaspoonvfx.com](mailto:todd@teaspoonvfx.com).



Mari robot image created by artist Michael Wilde





# Your Career & Lifestyle Annual Audit

With another year in the books, it's time to look back and take a self-audit to see how you did and more importantly, what needs to improve in the coming year.

**R**ate each of the following items 0 to 5, 0 being "Strong No", 5 being "Absolutely!", 1-4 being somewhere in between, and check your results at the bottom.

## Clients

1. Have you enjoyed working with each of your clients?
2. Are you completely free of toxic clients?
3. Have you met all client expectations throughout the year?
4. Did you acquire several new clients?
5. Did you receive multiple compliments on your performance throughout the year?
6. Did you receive new referrals from existing clients?

## Earnings & Growth

7. Are you pleased with the amount of money you made?
8. Did you make enough money to easily cover all your expenses and have plenty left over?
9. Did you make significantly more money than the previous year?
10. Were you able to earn more money per hour or per project than the previous year for the same or less work effort?
11. Did the size and scope of your projects increase from the year before?
12. Did you increase your rates or fees from the previous year?
13. Did the need for your services grow substantially enough that you were required to expand your team or business?
14. Did you reward your team and clients with gifts and/or bonuses?

## Schedule & Lifestyle

15. Do you consider your career your "dream job"?
16. Are you happy with the amount of time you spent working on a weekly basis?
17. Were you able to take multiple vacations, both large and small?
18. Were you able to take miscellaneous time off as needed to attend to personal matters?
19. Were you able to unplug and be off the clock at a reasonable hour each day?

20. When thinking about your career this past year, did it often make you smile?

## Efficiency & Performance

21. Did you become a stronger negotiator than the year before?
22. Did you improve your delegation skills?
23. Did you streamline or automate multiple tasks that were previously overly repetitious?
24. Did you noticeably improve production efficiency to the point where it had a positive impact on your bottom line?
25. Did you hire a coach, trainer, or consultant to help improve your craft or business?
26. Did your successes throughout the year inspire others to ask for your advice?

## Branding & Marketing

27. Does your niche clearly separate you from other similar businesses?



**Rick Sanchez has mastered the art of self-realization after hopping between many realities.**

28. Did you give your web site and social media a makeover?
29. Did you spend at least 25% of your time and/or budget on marketing?
30. Did you find and utilize at least 2 new advertising or marketing outlets or systems?

## Results

### 0 – 60

You need a complete career makeover. Leave everything you are doing behind and pursue an entirely different path for the sake of you, your family, and your more-than-likely dissatisfied clients.

### 61 – 90

Major fixes are needed in order to sustain your

current career path. Focus on remedying the most urgent items immediately, otherwise a major career change will be needed if not forced upon you.

### 90 – 120

You are among the average, moderately successful business owners or independent professionals of the world – not making huge waves or lighting up the sky with your success or happiness, but more or less making ends meet and offering a relatively valuable service. Focus on improving Branding & Marketing and Efficiency & Performance in the coming year for better results.

### 120 – 140

Congratulations, you are among the most successful, career-minded people on the planet! Keep doing what you're doing, focusing on Earnings & Growth and Schedule & Lifestyle to take things to the next level both personally and professionally this year.

### 141 – 150

You and your career are one! You are living the life of which others only dream. Be cautious, however, as success is fleeting, so be sure to continue developing, improving, and innovating all the things that have gotten you this far. Seriously consider coaching or mentoring those who are struggling or just starting out on their path.

## In Perpetuity

Time is of the essence, as they say, and this goes doubly so for your career so keep this checklist handy and set up a reminder to fill it out every year.

Additionally, keep these items fresh in your mind on a daily basis to help achieve the highest quality career and most abundant lifestyle possible.

**Martin Grebing is the president of Funnybone Animation Studios. He can be reached at [www.funnyboneanimation.com](http://www.funnyboneanimation.com)**



# Hearts and Flowers

By Charles Solomon

## Ouran High School Host Club: The Complete Series

Funimation, 3 discs, Blu-ray; \$49.98

When *Tenchi Muyo!* debuted in 1992, it established the anime genre of the Harem Comedy: A good-hearted but seemingly ordinary guy finds himself surrounded by beautiful girls who compete for his affection. In *Love, Hina* (2000), Keitaro was preparing to re-take the entrance exam for prestigious Tokyo University when his grandmother retired, making him the manager of an apartment building that served as a high school girl's dorm – with foreseeable complications. Three supposed Norse deities vie for the affection of college sophomore Keichi in *Oh My Goddess!* (2005).

Not surprisingly, women manga artists turned this silly but sexist genre on its ear. An early example of this turnabout was Bisco Hatori's 2002 manga *Ouran High School Host Club*, which was animated by Studio Bones for TV in 2006. It debuted in North American three years later.

Ouran High is an elite private academy, catering to the super-rich and supercilious. To amuse themselves, the richest, most attractive boys in the school have set up a host club, where they dispense tea and charm to the girls. Each of the hosts represents a specific "type." Club president Tamaki embodies the "blond prince;" short, cute Mitsukuni is the "Lolita boy." Kiyoyu is tall and coolly hip; identical twins Hikaru and Kaoru suggest "forbidden brotherly love." (Host clubs really exist: Anyone wandering through the tackier parts of Shinjuku will pass numerous venues inviting well-to-do women to join and be cosseted by handsome young men.)

Haruhi Fujioka, a brilliant scholarship student who's such a schlump no one recognizes

she's a girl, stumbles into the club room and knocks over an antique vase. To repay the ¥8 million (about \$80,000 US) price of the vase, the members demand she dress as a boy and join their club. Initially, the boys – and their customers – mock "Haru." When she comes back from the store with a jar of instant coffee, everyone is dumbfounded: They've never tasted "commoner's coffee."

But Haru's caring personality and understated intelligence quickly win the boys' affections. She's the only one who can tell Hikaru and Kaoru apart: Until now, they divided the world into themselves – and "other people." Tamaki falls for her, although he tries to hide his attraction. Haru also proves popular with the customers. The girls are used to the boys' over-the-top declarations of adoration; quiet sincerity and common sense are novelties.

Japanese audiences are more accepting of cross-dressing animated and

Rennie Mackintosh-influenced decors in another cross-dressing saga, *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (1996).

The phenomenon extends beyond anime and manga. During the Edo era, geisha would study *onnagata* – Kabuki actors who specialize in female roles – to learn the proper deportment of a woman of refinement. The young women who perform the heartthrob male roles in the elaborate shows of the all-female Takarazuka Review have huge fan followings among tween and high school girls.

In the second half of *Host Club*, the filmmakers delve into the characters' pasts, which help explain their odd personalities. Kyoya, the neglected youngest son of a stern father, made his first friend when his parents insisted he hang out with Tamaki to cement their families' corporate links. Mitsukuni was forced

to follow his family's tradition of martial arts training and competitions. Hikaru and Kaoru never paid attention to anyone else until Tamaki recruited them. Most of the backstory is given through dialogue: The animation is rather limited, though not so limited as to be distracting.

Despite their good looks, social prominence, and wealth, the boys led

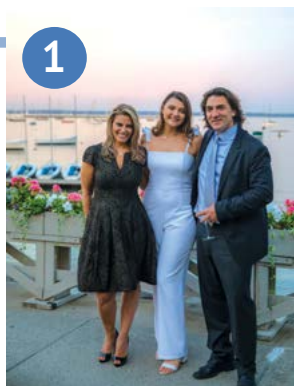
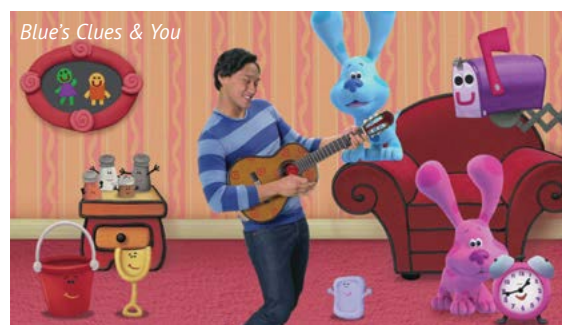
lonely lives. Tamaki's Host Club has given them the one thing they lacked: a sense of belonging. Haruhi, who has been isolated by her IQ and relative poverty, also acquires a much-needed set of friends. The warmth of these bonds doesn't prevent the Hosts from squabbling among themselves like four-year-olds, competing for Haru's attention, and generally acting as idiotically as they did in the first episodes, but it gives the series enough weight to balance the silliness. ♦



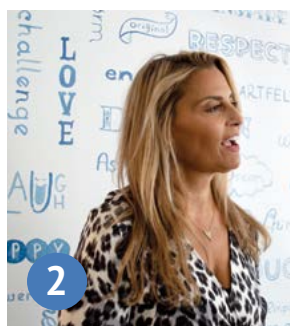
manga characters than their American counterparts, and there's a long history of transvestite anime heroines. Sapphire in Osamu Tezuka's *Princess Knight* (1967) was somehow born "with both the pink heart of a girl and the blue heart of a boy." Oscar François de Jarjayes, the dashing hero(ine) of Riyoko Ikeda's slushy period romance, *The Rose of Versailles* (1979) was raised as a boy: She becomes an officer in Marie Antoinette's royal guard. The stylized roses in the titles of *Host Club* spoof the Charles



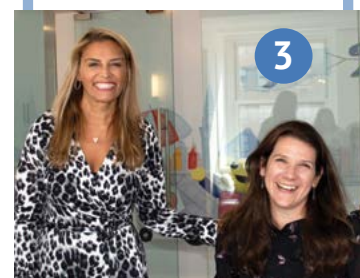
This month, we pay a visit to **Angela Santomero**, the super talented and acclaimed exec producer and co-creator of popular shows such as *Blue's Clue*, *Blue's Clues & You!*, *Super Why!*, *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, *Creative Galaxy*, *Wishenpoof!* And *Charlie's Colorform City*.



Angela and her husband Greg celebrate her oldest daughter's high school graduation. (We know Steve and Blue were somewhere on the dance floor.)



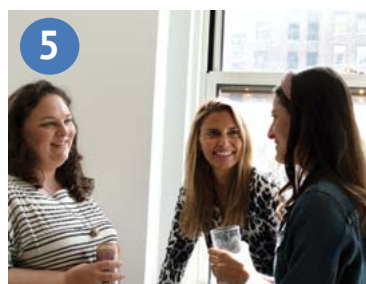
Angela likes this white board in her New York City office which reminds her of all the things she loves.



Angela and her head writer Jill Cozza-Turner take a break every hour to take photos for their fans.



An obscure clause in Angela's contract forces her to pose in front of the 9 Story logo during company lunches.



VP of production and development Sarah Wallendjack and supervising producer Alexandra Schwartz tell Angela everyone at the office demands Baby Yoda dolls this holiday season.



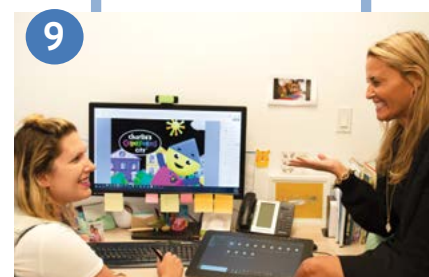
Angela tells them they're all getting something better—their own Angela dolls.



Angela enjoys showing her latest Emmy (Best Preschool Children's Animated Series for *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*) to everyone in the building each day.



Here's a flashback to the 2019 Emmy Awards when Angela and her team were the big winners.



Angela and creative director Stephanie Six are planning to introduce some exciting new colors and shapes to *Charlie's Colorform City* next season.



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BEST SONG "INTO THE UNKNOWN"

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NOMINATIONS  
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**BEST ORIGINAL SONG**  
**"INTO THE UNKNOWN"**

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
KRISTEN ANDERSON-LOPEZ  
ROBERT LOPEZ

